The Dissertation Committee for Ryan Sawyer McCormack Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

Bulgarian Bulge: Jazz, Subjectivity, and Modernity in Bulgaria

Committee:

Sonia Seeman, Supervisor

Veit Erlmann

Robin Moore

Mary Neuburger

Kathleen Stewart

Bulgarian Bulge: Jazz, Subjectivity, and Modernity in Bulgaria

by

Ryan Sawyer McCormack, B.M.; M.M.; M.M.

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Bulgarian Bulge: Jazz, Subjectivity, and Modernity in Bulgaria

Ryan Sawyer McCormack, Ph.D.

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Supervisor: Sonia Seeman

This dissertation investigates various issues at play in the development and perpetuation of jazz in Bulgaria from the early-20th century until the present. In particular, I explore jazz's emergence within the conceptualization of subjective experience unique to modern Bulgaria. In this way I move away from the relatively static notion of a "transcendent" subjectivity centered on the "improviser" that constitutes a great deal of jazz historiography and discourse. Through an examination of jazz musicians, listeners, and government critics in different periods of Bulgarian history, I seek two broad but not mutually exclusive goals. The first is trace how "jazz" was conceptualized in different quarters of Bulgarian society and how those conceptualizations factored into the composition, recording, and patronage of music. This second is to posit alternatives to a subjectivity of "transcendence" in jazz performance, using the Bulgarian case as an example. Throughout the dissertation, I use "fascination" and "boredom" as the two concepts through which to ground a historically and materially-bound subjectivity that better takes into account social, cultural, and economic factors unique to Bulgaria. Ultimately, these concepts feature prominently in understanding jazz's role in framing the fractured subjectivities of Bulgarians within

modernity, as well as the constant historical struggle by Bulgarians to center senses of self and place within a changing Bulgaria, a changing Europe, and a changing world.

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Note on Transliterations

The transliteration style from the Cyrillic to Latin alphabet used in this dissertation is borrowed from Timothy Rice's *May It Fill Your Soul* (1994), and is now commonly used by musical scholars writing about Bulgarian music. The Bulgarian letter "p" (r) is always rolled. The cluster дж is transliterated as "dzh" pronounced with a "j" as in the word "jazz." The vowel й (i) only appears after other vowels and can be inferred through such words as in "gaida" or "Metodii." The vowel ъ (ŭ) is used to distinguish a short "u" sound from a long "u." For the ease of the reader, I introduce the English translation first, followed by the Bulgarian word – ex. "bagpipe" (*gaida*) – and thereafter use the English translation exclusively unless otherwise noted in the footnotes.

а = a (father)
б = b (boy)
в = v (vat)
г = g (girl)
д = d (drum)
е = e (let)
ж = zh (pleasure)
и = i (meet)
й = i (rain)
к = k (kitten)
л = l (lamp)
м = m (map)
н = n (nap)
о = o (ocean)
п = p (pet)
р = r (radiant)
с = s (sand)
т = t (trumpet)
у = u (truth)
ф = f (fancy)
х = h, aspirated (hostage)
ц = ts (gnats)
ч = ch (champion)
ш = sh (should)
щ = sht (mashed)
ъ = ŭ (button)
ь = ’. pronounced y (yank)
ю = yu (unique)

Prologue

Why jazz? Put bluntly, this elegant yet immensely complex question has framed the genesis, construction, and execution of this project since my earliest inquiries. The question has been asked of me by fellow scholars, friends, musicians, acquaintances, and casual conversants on airplanes and buses. This prologue sets the context for answering this question, and explains the methodologies used in this dissertation. This context includes an outline of some genres and terminology, as well as a brief overview of some methodological problems encountered while conducting my research. In providing these details, I desire for the reader to better understand some of the choices I made in theory and narrative construction throughout this dissertation.

My own engagement with Bulgarian music is intertwined with my experience in jazz, which in some respects parallels the experiences of my Bulgarian consultants who found themselves attracted to different musical worlds. When I was an undergraduate at West Virginia University, part of the degree program for jazz studies included a weekly seminar. In these seminars, all of the jazz studies majors met collectively with our advisor, Paul Scea, and discussed various issues in the jazz, give presentations on topics, or have tutorials on transcription and arranging. During the fall semester in 2000 (my junior year), Professor Scea could not attend our designated seminar time because of a faculty senate obligation, so he altered the structure of the seminar in his absence. Instead of presentations, he left us with a different CD every week, which we had to listen to and subsequently discuss amongst ourselves. One day in early October, Scea

decided to break the normal pattern of recordings by avant-garde artists like Sam Rivers and Julius Hemphill by playing *Balkanology*, the 1991 album released by Bulgarian Romani clarinetist Ivo Papasov. The music on this album was part of the wedding music genre, and I was captivated by the furious technique, complex rhythms, and "bizarre" harmonies that this music presented me. It spoke in ways no other music I encountered up to that point had, and it spawned a keen interest for me in all things Bulgaria. I carried this interest with me to Ohio University, where I began a master's degree in music composition in the fall of 2002. My time there began a quest to spread the word of the existence of Papasov and his music to the ears of anyone who would listen. By the time I completed my MM in Ethnomusicology at UT-Austin in 2006, I had in mind a massive project involving a critique of jazz studies, and needed some locale through which to ground my research. Bulgaria came to mind almost immediately, based on my previous dalliances with "wedding music."

Throughout the intervening years I have pondered reflexively on the moment of this "encounter" in an attempt to contextualize how my own fascination with "wedding music" turned into a desire to understand and document the history of jazz in Bulgaria. In doing so, I ascertained the many levels through which jazz and Bulgaria had become interconnection through my own experiences and processes of thought. My first exposure to Bulgarian music was through my jazz education. My interest in the music was framed through the pedagogical conventions of institutionalized jazz practice, conventions that I was starting to question even at that young age.

In time, as I moved more and more into the academic milieu, I began to explicitly notice the absence of "jazz" in writings on Bulgarian popular music where such a perspective could provide some much needed context. This absence was especially noticeable in the writings on "wedding music" by a diverse array of scholars such as Tim Rice, Donna Buchanan, Carol Silverman, and Claire Levy. What I found in their work was an acknowledgment of the *influence* of jazz on musicians like Ivo Papasov and saxophonist Yuri Yunakov, but little to no context about what the dynamics of their engagement with jazz was. Moreover, there was no exploration about what the word "jazz" even entailed for these musicians – did they see it as a genre? A set of practices? A way of life? The desire to more fully answer these questions, and provide tools for other scholars to answer them in their own work, drove me to construct this project with as much depth and context as my abilities and the available material would allow.

Why jazz? Understanding jazz's impact and dissemination in Bulgaria historically opens up the framework for understanding how other popular genres like *chalga* are in dialogue with the complex construction of modernity in Bulgaria. Many of the political and social attitudes toward music with perceived elements of "foreign-ness" were codified during jazz's adoption in Bulgaria during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, the constantly changing status of "jazz" as a music from the "Other" West, not fully integrated into the Bulgarian sense of self as national object, means that its practice can give windows into the Bulgarian experience of modernity that other musical genres – institutionalized folk music, rock and hip-hop, and *chalga* – cannot. Put simply, jazz is perhaps the only avenue through which to fully critique the entire scope of

modern subject formation in modern Bulgaria. Unpacking the dynamics of this critique and its historical manifestations is one of my primary goals in this dissertation.

An example of the potential for research in jazz to inform work in other Bulgarian genres such as *chalga* or pop-folk can be found in the role of jazz in creating a modern sense of womanhood throughout the early-to-mid 20th century in Bulgaria. I offer this brief case as both an example of jazz's potential as a conceptual mediator of locality, and an opportunity to address an issue of gender that is noticeably absent in the rest of the dissertation.

First, a brief understanding of the genre of *chalga* is necessary. *Chalga* is a popular genre in Bulgaria that is an amalgamation of Bulgarian, Romani, Turkish, and other Balkan influences with Western pop, hip-hop, and electronica framed through a local dance known as the *kyuchek*. It is a genre that is heavily criticized by cultural elites in Bulgaria, to the effect of, as Claire Levy argues, revitalizing an "old national identity syndrome" intertwined with Orientalism (Levy 2004, 43). *Chalga* was also a revitalization of traditions of Turkish and Roma minorities that had been cast aside during the late communist period in favor of a "purer," ethnically Bulgarian national identity. While the debates about the veracity and place of *chalga* in Bulgarian life are numerous and contradictory, one aspect that most commentators agree on is that the highly sexualized spectacle of the female body in *chalga* performance has roots in "orientalized" performance practices such as the "belly dance" (Turkish: *çiftetelli*). These influences have led to a generally reductive notion of the female body in *chalga* in reference to this idea of otherness. In other words, even with the "modern," Western

influences in the genre, the female body is seen by most as anything *but* modern in this context.

In this instance, the history of jazz in Bulgaria can perform a unique and necessary mediating function, bridging together East and West in discourse about *chalga*. Jazz vocalists of the 1930s like Lyusi Naidenova and Leni Vŭlkova were symbols in the changing image and role of women in Bulgarian cities. Naidenova especially was known to smoke, drink, wear slacks, swear, and perform other activities coded as masculine in Bulgarian society until that time. By the end of the Second World War, a new group of vocalists led by the erstwhile Lea Ivanova expanded upon the image of the modern woman, performing in bands of the era whilst juxtaposed against the place of women as socialist subjects. This image of "new womanhood" as codified through diverse socialist-inspired discourses on social egalitarianism had a profound effect in bridging together jazz-inspired pop stars like Lili Ivanova and Kameliya Todorova with the current array of *pop-folk* stars such as Gloriya and Desislava. In this context, the history of femininity in Bulgarian jazz gives a new perspective on *chalga*'s own history with regard to the female body.

Periodization in Modern Bulgarian History

Given the long historical scope of this dissertation, it becomes useful to articulate and clarify the periods in Bulgarian history that readers will encounter in order to understand some of the broader historical context inherent in each chapter's construction. What follows is not a detailed history, but rather a series of bullet points that introduce

the reader to some of the actors and events directly referenced or alluded to in the following pages.

Bulgaria was absorbed into the Ottoman Empire shortly after Sultan Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople in 1453, and the lands of the former Bulgarian Kingdom spent the next 425 years under direct Turkish rule. Bulgaria gained partial autonomy from the weakening Ottomans in 1878 as a result of the Russo-Turkish War and the Treaty of San Stefano. The codification of the modern Bulgarian state took another thirty years, marked by the annexation of the Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia in 1886 and culminating in the granting of full independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908. The decade following the creation of the Bulgarian nation-state was marked by imperial aspirations on the regions of Macedonia, Thrace, and Dobrŭdzha and the wars meant to secure them, including the Balkan Wars (1912-13) and the First World War. All of these conflicts were disastrous for Bulgaria, resulting in massive territorial concessions and reparations to the Allies, and the tremendous loss of life suffered most acutely by the agrarian classes that precipitated political upheaval and the rise of Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski's Agrarian Union to power immediately after the War.

From this point, modern Bulgarian history is most often broken up into three concurrent periods. The first is most commonly called the Interwar Period (1918 - 1944), bookended by the First and Second World Wars. This era is noteworthy for its intense political instability, as no government lasted more than five years until Tsar Boris III took direct control of the country in 1936. As I will show in Chapter 1, most of the institutions of modern Bulgarian urban life that started to take shape after 1878 became more acute in

this period. Cities like Sofia, Plovdiv, Ruse, and Varna saw their populations grow exponentially as more and more peasants migrated to those cities to fill jobs in manufacturing and production. New technology led to the birth of the recording industry, the national radio, and other institutions of mass media and sound reproduction. By the time Boris gained political control, there was even a resurgence in interest toward reclaiming the "true" Bulgarian regions of Macedonia, Thrace, and Southern Dobrŭdzha (lost to Romania in the Treaty of Versailles). These nationalist ambitions were the catalyst for Bulgaria's alliance with Germany and the Axis Powers, an arrangement that led to both military defeat and absorption into the sphere of influence of Soviet power.

The Communist Period (1944-1989) is agreed by historians to have begun with the Fatherland Front's (*Otchestven front*) coup on September 9th, 1944. The coup overthrew the remnants of the monarchy, a regency running the country for young Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha in the wake of Boris III's sudden death in 1943. Though the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) didn't codify political control of Bulgaria until 1947/48, the party began to make its stamp on Bulgarian life almost immediately with the close advice of the Soviets. Many of the social and economic tenets of Stalinist communist were adopted during this period, including attempts at collectivizing agriculture, the liquidation of most private landholdings to state control, and the centralization of manufacturing and banking into the political apparatuses of the BCP. In later years, the BCP took a vested interest in the arts through the development of organizations such as the Writers' Union and the Union of Bulgarian Composers (UBC). These organizations, while giving writers and composers access to grants, teaching

positions, publication opportunities, and financial support, also guaranteed the expectation that published works reflected the interests of the BCP's political and social platforms.

The resignation of longtime First Secretary and Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov in 1989 began what is most commonly called the Post-Communist Period (1989 - present). As with the rest of the Eastern Bloc, Bulgaria dismantled most of the institutions of the communist period and introduced sweeping economic and political reforms. Free multiparty elections were held for the first time since before the Second World War, introducing new political parties like the United Democratic Front (UDF). Industry and agriculture were privatized, and families that had lost land to the BCP in the late-1940s sought to reclaim it, including land formerly belonging to the monarchy that had been liquidated and redistributed early in the communist years. Free market principles of capitalism were adopted, radically reshaping Bulgarian life and giving Bulgarians access to goods and services that were considered luxuries under communism (one friend recalled, for example, only being able to get bananas on Christmas Day until recently). Though the country was subject to massive corruption during the 1990s, leaving Bulgaria relatively bankrupt economically for most of the decade, the growth of the foreign real estate industry and the Black Sea tourist industry in the 2000s brought much needed capital into Bulgaria. This influx of capital stabilized a tenuous economic situation as the country adjusted to the machinizations of a market economy. Still, the problems of corruption, embezzlement of public funds, lack of proper funding into education and

welfare, and the emigration of young, highly skilled and educated Bulgarians to Western Europe remain significant problems to this day.

All three periods will be discussed extensively throughout the dissertation through the lens of musical production and consumption, as well as governmental aesthetics and management of the arts.

On Fascination and Boredom

In order to better express the certain aspects of the Bulgarian experience and conceptualization of modernity throughout this work, I frequently employ the terms "fascination" and "boredom." The relative histories within the Western philosophical and critical theoretical traditions will be more thoroughly explored in the Introduction. More than simply epistemological and ontological placeholders, these terms have deep resonance with the Bulgarian experience of modernity. The affective nature of fascination and boredom as I use them throughout the dissertation is particularly acute in the linguistic and experiential construction of boredom by Bulgarians themselves. Though these words never explicitly came up in conversations with musicians and others during the course of my work in reference to jazz specifically, the affect of their presence was very clear to me as a researcher and an ethnographer, and this affect was only intensified once I parlayed these experiences with writings on subjective experiences in Bulgaria during the late-19th and early-20th centuries.

The very construction and usage of the terms "fascination" and "boredom" in the Bulgarian language more strongly emphasizes the relevance of this affective dimension.

Boredom, for example, has several useful connotations. There are a few different Bulgarian words that are commonly translated into English as "bored" or "boring." The most direct translation to "boredom" as a concept is the word *skuka*, which delineates from the word *skuchen* (dull). *Otegchavam*, is a verb meaning "to bore," and can also refer to "tire" or "wear on." The most common colloquial term emphasizing the experience of boredom, however, is *dosaden*, a word that can also refer to some kind of "annoyance." The most common verb manifestation of "to be bored" is the reflexive verb construction *dosadno mi e*, which taken literally means "it's boring to me." Such a construction implies the object status of that which "bores" the subject, and the "influence" that this object has over the subject within its affective sphere. Perhaps ironically, this notion of "influence" upon the subject has been one of the prime attributes leveled through the discourse of fascination in Western modernity (see Introduction). Thus, from the very colloquial usage of boredom in Bulgaria comes a tangible epistemological link to fascination that further encourages a binding of the two terms in this work.

The affective nature of "fascination" within the Bulgarian linguistic milieu is just as apparent as that of "boredom." The word most generally associated with fascination in Bulgarian, *ocharovanie*, stems from the verb *ocharovam*, meaning to "ravish" or "charm." As I will show in the introduction, the historical linkage between *charming* and *fascinating* in Western discourses on magic are very strong. Coupled with this is the complex of fascination embedded within the relationship between Bulgaria and Western Europe dating back to the years of Ottoman control. To put it succinctly, the fascination

of Bulgarians toward the West laid within the tenets of Western modernity and progress, tenets which were denied to Bulgarians until much too late because of the political and social influence of the Ottoman yoke. The Western European fascination with Bulgaria, on the other hand, was defined by Bulgaria's status as an oriental mediator combining aspects of West and East into something slightly less "dangerous" to the European subject than the "true" Orient. *Ovcharovanie*, in this context, serves as a vital link between multiple notions of fascination that encompass such things as colonialism, metaphysics, and local identity.

Most importantly, "boredom" and "fascination" encompass an experience of the construction of self and subject position in modernity that resonates strongly with the history of modern Bulgaria. Bulgarians, on the fringes of Europe both geographically and in terms of identity, have since 1878 mediated a tangible sense of being "outside" with relation to European modernity. "Boredom" and "fascination" have likewise been used to frame similar notions of being "outside" of the scope of the rational, thinking subject of Western metaphysics. The allure of these words, as I will show throughout this dissertation, is in the way that they are used to articulate subject positions that encompass the worlds of the dangerous, the unknown, and the inarticulate. In other words, fascination and boredom - *because* of their status in Western thought as veritable conceptual "outsiders" - become ideal in order to experientially historicize Bulgaria's own "outside" status within the modern Western milieu.

Outline of Methodological Problems and Solutions

The three broad areas that I have discussed in this prologue are all important aspects of my unique and varied methodological approach. I developed this approach in response to the people and institutions that I engaged with throughout my research, and the various difficulties that emerged. Though these difficulties are intertwined on various levels, I describe each in detail in order to give a better picture to the reader of the problems faced, and my solutions to those problems in order to construct the dissertation as in its ultimate form.

The first problem revolved around the lack of materials in libraries and archives. A lack of materials when conducting historical and/or ethnographic research has certainly befallen many scholars before me, and in this case has proven to be a similar problem for native Bulgarians.[1] I found the lack of historical documents referencing jazz to be the result of several factors. One was the lack of comprehensive organization amongst the library and archive systems in Bulgaria, making it difficult to identify which documents might be pertinent to research on "jazz." Another, related problem was the ubiquitous nature with which the word "jazz" has been used throughout the history of modern Bulgaria. Most often, especially in government documents, the word "jazz" referred not to a musical genre, but rather any series of youth practices involving music and an affront to "accepted" moral judgment. This state was most often the case during the early communist period, and often led to musicians and listeners to engage in actions such as disguising their repertoire from the authorities. It also accounts for the lack of recordings

[1] A similar sentiment was expressed by Bulgarian journalist/author Vladimir Gadzhev in the prologue of his recent book about jazz in Bulgaria.

from this era, as the Bulgarian recording industry was in its infancy just before the Second World War and heavily censored in the years after. In extreme cases, as we will see in the story of Aleksandŭr Nikolov in Chapter 2, police files and surveillance records were consciously destroyed by the BCP in an attempt to "erase" the presence of those who were actively antagonistic toward Party policy. Reconstructing this scene in via oral history and interviews is difficult since so few of the musicians from that era have survived until the present day, and very few were interviewed extensively during their lifetimes due to the "bourgeois" coding attached to their music.

The second problem involved my own position as an American scholar and how it necessitated different strategies with regard to conversations and interviews. Some of these issues will be explored more thoroughly in Chapter 5, but I will emphasize one particular aspect that is useful for the reader to keep in mind throughout the last half of the dissertation.

My country of birth had more profound effects in how people of various generations viewed me than I realized when laying the groundwork for this project during 2006 and 2007. When I arrived in Bulgaria, I met with another ethnomusicologist who described to me some of the various difficulties involved in interpreting the *ways* in which people had talked to him, and how this aspect influenced the ways in which he conducted interviews. Although I originally thought his difficulties stemmed from his subject matter (the *pop-folk* industry) and how the industries ties to organized crime and other institutions of post-communist wealth precipitated secrecy, I soon found the same problems appearing in my own interactions. With older musicians, there was still a

veneer of distrust, at least at first, due to the BCP's careful enforcement of rules regarding who could talk to Westerners.[2] The legacy of this enforcement lay in the difficulty there was in getting older players to agree to be recorded for interviews. With younger musicians, many of whom were students and had not lived through the most rigorous years of communist censorship, my position as a scholar from the perceived "center" of the jazz universe (the United States) put me in the peculiar position of *being* interviewed oftentimes as much as I was conducting interviews. From both parties, my motives were always being questions, albeit in often playful and nonthreatening ways.

After some time in the field, I developed a methodological strategy of listening and observation without relying on the use of recordings or interview scripts to ascertain the perspectives of musicians and others. While some finer detail was lost in this process of simply "hanging out" as ethnography, this process served me best in terms of circumventing the "problem" of my American-ness in the process of conducting this research. As such, I feature very few direct quotes from musicians not already published in third-party interviews, and many opinions that I do use are either paraphrased from my own memory or not given direct attribution to the speaker. Conducting my ethnography in this way had the result of more fully immersing me in the everyday lives and practices of Bulgarians, and creating a more permeable barrier between ethnographer and subject/object. What was sacrificed in raw data, I argue, was made up for in terms of

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[2] Donna Buchanan devotes an entire chapter to the ethnographic encounter in Bulgaria during the late-1980s that articulates many of the institutional barriers that I am describing. See Buchanan 2006, Chapter 2: 52-78.

atmosphere, giving a better sense to the readers of musicians' state of affairs as well as any formal interview could.

Introduction: Jazz in Bulgaria + Bulgarians in Jazz = Bulgarian Jazz? Toward A Critique of the "Transcendental Improvising Subject" in Jazz Historiography

In the years since I first conceived of this project, I have been asked countless times by friends, family, colleagues, casual acquaintances, and strangers to describe *what* exactly "Bulgarian jazz" sounds like. Often, this is the first question that follows my typical explanation of my research and what it entails. Each time, as I think about how to specifically frame my answer toward the expectations of the inquisitor, I am inevitably reminded of an innocuous post on Facebook by Bulgarian pianist Vasil Parmakov from several months before. The post read as follows:

> *When a Bulgarian jazz musician gets into the company of foreigners, they usually ask him whether he is playing Bulgarian jazz. The guy tries to explain that (you see) he is Bulgarian. Making music. Therefore - it is music made by a Bulgarian. There is nothing else to be. It's simple logic.*

Music made by a Bulgarian…simple logic. As we shall see throughout this dissertation, Parmakov's attitude toward the prospect of a Bulgarian jazz is commonplace enough to warrant a significant amount of attention. Is he implying that jazz, as a historically foreign music, cannot become part of a truly Bulgarian expression? Is he stating that an identity as a "jazz musician" is not possible given the political economy of the Bulgarian music industry? Or is he accepting Bulgarians as being outside of the historical canon of jazz production due to its historical and geographic isolation from the United States until after the fall of the communist regime in 1989?

Such attitudes are not limited to Bulgarian musicians. These same questions can be asked of Vladimir Gadzhev's book *Jazz in Bulgaria and Bulgarians in Jazz* (*Jazzŭt v Bŭlgariya i Bŭlgarii v Jazzŭt*), a landmark 2010 publication on jazz and Bulgaria that was an invaluable resource for this dissertation. Gadzhev, who began his career as a journalist in the 1960s, has been one of the few consistent voices on jazz in Bulgaria since that time and is in many ways the only "expert" on the subject alive today. His latest book presents an exhaustive historical account of important figures in Bulgarian jazz from 1911 until 1989, with a short epilogue chronicling events in the 1990s and early-2000s. Though Gadzhev ultimately does little to engage the issues surrounding Bulgaria's lack of place with the canon of jazz historiography, his book stands as a long-overdue historical chronicle of key figures in the development of ideas about the genre. My interest in the book, however, goes beyond its content or scholarly impact. In light of Parmakov's statement above, one notices the seemingly deliberate linguistic aspect of the book's title. The title's two parts each imply a different dimension in the historical relationship between "Bulgaria" the state and nation, and "jazz" the style and genre. The phrase "Jazz in Bulgaria" emphasizes the presence of the style within the confines of the state, though never directly embedding it within a particular temporal spectrum. "Bulgarians in Jazz" alludes to jazz's practitioners from Bulgaria belonging to a broader global and homogeneous conceptual field termed under the genre "jazz." The title avoids the use of the adjectival "Bulgarian jazz" (*Bŭlgarski dzhaz*), which gives the impression that "jazz" is not something that can be constructed as "Bulgarian" or part of the Bulgarian milieu. Like Parmakov, Gadzhev seems to tacitly emphasize "jazz" as

something from the outside that is performed by Bulgarian musicians, but is not the *piece de resistance* of their musical identities.

Recent Bulgarian scholarship has attempted to rectify the absence of writing about the history and practice of jazz in Bulgaria.[1] In addition to Gadzhev's book, Claire Levy's 2007 book *Ethnojazz: Local Projections in the Global Village* (*Etnodzhaz: lokalni proektsii v globalnoto selo*) helps to codify issues about the development of jazz in Bulgaria through the 20th century. Levy's book chronicles the rise of "ethnojazz" (*etnodzhaz*) in the 1980s and 1990s, and how its development reflected some of the broader attitudes about jazz, music, and cosmopolitanism in Bulgaria dating back to the 1960s.[2] She describes how the influence of Western culture forms led to the desire by

[1] Several books and articles that reference "wedding music" (*svatbarska muzika*), for example, comment about the influence of jazz on this music, but there has been no attempt to explore the complexities of this relationship (Rice 1994, Buchanan 1996). The bulk of musical scholarship on Bulgaria in English concentrates on the politics of folklore homogenization under communism, or, in the realm of art music, the output of Bulgarian opera singers, or the phenomenon of wedding music in conjunction with politics concerning the Turkish and Roma minority populations (Buchanan 1991, 2006; Silverman 1989, 2007). The mostly-Bulgarian scholarship that deals with music in the pre-communist period focuses on case studies of village ritual and music typology. This is not surprising given the commitment of pre-communist and communist musicologists to the cataloguing of "folk knowledge" (*narodznanie*) and the essentialization of the rural as purest form of the nation within Bulgarian ethnology after 1878 (Sugar 2002, Valtchinova 2004).

[2] Cosmopolitanism has undergone a great deal of revision in recent years, most notably through the lenses of various poststructural and postcolonial critiques. This line of thought merits a brief exploration of a few aspects of cosmopolitanism that may prove useful in framing this project. One aspect of particular importance is the notion of rehabilitating the concept of being "cosmopolitan" away from Kantian Eurocentrism, remapping it in a way that fits more in line with contemporary conceptions of localized modernity (Brennan 1997, Cheah and Robbins 1998), ethics (Harvey 2000, Neilson 1999), psychoanalysis (Shih 2001), and history (Mignolo 2000). This move, which mirrors similar stances throughout postcolonial and subaltern scholarship in cultural and area studies, is ultimately significant for two reasons. First, the adoption of cosmopolitanism as a frame for localized modernity can be seen as one step in attempting to alleviate the tension between models of "alternative modernities" based in subaltern and feminist studies and the colonial yokes that educated their proponents (Abu-Lughod 1991, Appadurai 1990 and 1996, Chakrabarty 2000, Chattergee 1993, Spivak 1999). Second, cosmopolitanism maintains a historically dialectical relationship with universalism, which has slowly crept back into academic concerns with the explosion of discourses in globalization and the whitewashing nature of the image in late capitalism (Jameson 1991). Julia Kristeva and Jacque Derrida, among others, have shown the various ways

certain artists to modernize the folk tradition through use of Western instruments, recording technologies and, most importantly, improvisational forms and styles. The resulting genre of ethnojazz (*etnodzhaz*), she argues, was reflective of Bulgaria's place in the world after the transition – embodying the tensions between tradition and modernity in cultural forms, mediated by musicians and composers who improvised a new future for the country in the "global village."

While these are both salient studies in their own right, neither addresses broader issues of the canonization of jazz in historiography, and the ultimate place (or lack thereof) of Bulgarians within such a canon. Scott Deveaux's 1991 article "Constructing the Jazz Tradition: Jazz Historiography" was one of the first pointed critiques in musical scholarship regarding the construction of the "genius" jazz musician and the building of a jazz "canon" around such geniuses through popular media, recordings, and books. The article is often cited as the basis for the boom of research into jazz outside of the United States that became popular starting in the mid-1990s. The politics of employing and critiquing this canon have most often taken place solely within the American history of jazz, leaving the particular historical trajectories of places like Bulgaria to the side. In this way, canonization remains a central issue in the perpetuation of a center (US) – periphery (everywhere else) model of jazz's dissemination throughout the 20th century.

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in which cosmopolitanism has historically engaged with and perhaps even collapses the concept of Enlightenment universalism, and this work follows through into other avenues. These ideas create spaces for, among other things, the rewriting of national and regional identities and refiguring the social basis of homogeneity and origin through the lenses of modernity and state power (Derrida 1994 and 2001, Kristeva 1993, Leonard 2005).

In addition, neither Gadzhev nor Levy get to the heart of the historical, experiential, and philosophical reasons for statements like Parmakov's that deemphasize the notion of a "Bulgarian jazz." What is the significance of such a claim? What does it say about a specific experience of modernity and jazz in Bulgaria? What does it say about the construction of practice and subjectivity that doesn't fit within the confines of the "jazz canon"? In this dissertation I probe these questions by providing a historical perspective of musicians' practices, and how their engagement with jazz was shaped by political, social and economic practices in Bulgaria throughout its post-Liberation history. Adding to the research already published by Gadzhev, Levy, and others, this dissertation will be one of the first studies to historically construct the experience of jazz practice in Bulgaria, and relate it to broader philosophical issues of subjectivity and issues of canonization in jazz historiography and ethnographic studies.

In this regard, the dissertation follows the recent call from scholars such as Carol Muller and E. Taylor Atkins to reexamine the politics of historiography and place in writing about jazz production and consumption outside of the United States. Muller, for example, argues that beyond the national frame in the construction of jazz practice scholars must also emphasize the "transnational, diasporic, and cosmopolitan" (Muller 2007, 68). Atkins, taking a different tract, emphasizes the need to think of jazz as a globally significant from its earliest years of development, spread through the mechanisms of mass media, technology, trade, and international politics in the early-20th century (Atkins 2001, 2003). Both authors, in different ways, mediate the dominant center-periphery model of writing about jazz's development outside the United States,

choosing to emphasize the historical interconnectivity between places that could potentially add to the polyphony of voices and construct a more thorough history of the global production of jazz. Muller, Atkins, and others have been instrumental in building frameworks that better emphasize the peculiarities of time, space, and idea that are unique to conceptualizing jazz outside of the United States.

Central to the Muller and Atkins' analyses, however, lies a relatively homogeneous notion of jazz's relationship to social and political structures in different places. The adoption of jazz in South Africa/Japan/Great Britain is invariably reduced to a byproduct of the historical relationship with America and the imagination and/or experience of Americans and American life. At the heart of such a construction is the idea that jazz is still unequivocally American, with other adoptions of jazz serving, metaphorically, as elaborate arrangements of an already-established melody. In this way, scholars dealing with jazz outside of the US almost paradoxically reinforce the very center-periphery model of jazz historiography that is the object of their critiques.

For this reason, I argue that the history of jazz in Bulgaria cannot be properly conceptualized relying upon the inherent, immutable American-ness of jazz implicit in jazz historiography and discourse. I do not intend this argument as a challenge to the United States as the "birthplace" of jazz or African-Americans as the music's pioneers. Rather, moving away from constructing jazz as wholly American is necessary in order to more fully understand the fractured ontology of "jazz" historically in a place like Bulgaria.

Accomplishing this movement requires coupling the fracturing in jazz's object status with the fractured nature of subjectivity in Bulgaria more generally. Throughout the historical focus of this dissertation (c.1878-present), the philosophical and social construction of self amongst Bulgarians has resisted homogeneity and immutability. Fully understanding jazz's role in Bulgarian life, then, requires an understanding of subject construction that better incorporates social, cultural, economic, and historical forces that are specific to Bulgarian history and undermine the entire homogeneity of jazz and the jazz musician.

In order to properly lay the groundwork through which to construct the subjective confluence of Bulgarians and jazz, it is necessary to more thoroughly critique two relevant issues in the formation of subjectivity in jazz discourse and historiography. The first critique explores the allure of constructing "transcendence" in jazz discourse at the level of subjectivity, leading to the creation of what I am terming the "transcendental improvising subject."[3] The relationship between "transcendence" and subjectivity has a

[3] Improvisation, the third aspect of this subject position, will not receive the same kind of theoretical extrapolation as either "transcendence" or "subjectivity" in this introduction. The issue has been one of the most controversial aspects of jazz scholarship, and it brings forth an entire range of issues with regard toward the study of performance practice within the history of the music. The seeds of critiquing improvisation's pristine place in the jazz canon can be traced to the early-1990s, in the wake of the anti-exoticist critiques of anthropology and the social sciences voiced by James Clifford and George Marcus, among others, in the mid-1980s (Clifford 1988, 1997). Paul Berliner's massive book *Thinking In Jazz* (1994) stands as the most complete ethnographic study of jazz improvisation to date. This is accented by Ingrid Monson's *Saying Something* (1996), which builds on Berliner's emphasis on contextual meanings of improvisation to posit the interactions between musicians during performance as the most important aesthetic act(s) in jazz. In addition, two recent essay collections co-edited by Bruno Nettl (*In The Course of Performance* (1998) with Melinda Russell, and *Musical Improvisation: Art, Education, and Society* (2009) with Gabriel Solis), delve into issues of improvisation outside of the jazz milieu and the relationship of jazz historiography's dominance on theoretical extrapolation of improvisation to the lack of scholarship on the same improvisational issues outside of jazz.

Despite the influence of this body of work on jazz discourse in general, improvisation is still held in the imagination of musicians, listeners, and writers as the quintessential aesthetic act of the jazz

long history in Western philosophy, dating back to Descartes' position of the subject as the center of metaphysics. In jazz historiography, "transcendence" has been adopted as a central subject position through which the individual musician utilizes musical expression to move him or herself into a higher state of being. The link to transcendence in jazz stems from a complex amalgamation of elements of the Western philosophy, Christian spirituality, and the historical and empirical suffering of African-Americans under the auspices of slavery, Jim Crow, and white supremacy. Constructing the subject utilizing transcendence in this way is therefore reflective of a politics of African-American identity not easily applicable outside of the US.

To reinforce this point, I argue that the utilization of transcendence at the heart of jazz historiography is problematic in that it is possible to show that "subjects" or agents are historically and contextually mutable. Thus such studies view jazz as a genre that inherently conflates subjectivity with transcendence in a way that has been thoroughly critiqued within the Western philosophical tradition. I address the problem of conflation of "transcendence" and "subjectivity" by outlining the philosophical re-conceptualization of transcendence as a product of the human body starting in mid-19th century. In doing so, the connection between "transcendence" and the late-19th century politics of the

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musician, and what sets jazz apart from other forms of Western popular music. Improvisation, for my purposes, is included here to reflect the discursive and ontological status of the improviser as integral to the idealized subject position in jazz historiography. That this position is overly problematic, and deconstructed at length in the aforementioned works is reinforced through my critique of the "transcendental subject" in jazz. "Improvisation" and all of its historical complexity is inevitably implicated in such a subject position, hence why I have included it in my neologism. Some of these issues surrounding interpretation and the conceptual fetish for the improviser, in line with critiques voiced in Monson's and Solis' work, and its relationship to subject construction in jazz more broadly will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 6.

aesthetic "Black" body become clearer, paving the way for the confluence of jazz, subjectivity, and transcendence as a central position in jazz scholarship.

Grounding the association of transcendence and embodiment within contemporary Western thought on the matter is important in the critique of the "transcendental improvising subject" for two reasons. Not only did the issue of transcendence in Western philosophy become an issue of the body, technology, and popular music after 1850, but Bulgarians themselves frequently wrestled with the nature and dynamics of a "modern" and "Western" subjectivity in writings about art, society, and music during the late-19th and early 20th centuries. The context and scope of arguments about subjectivity within the Bulgarian aesthetic tradition will be taken up at length throughout the rest of this dissertation. But since jazz, as music and a modern lifestyle, developed under the wing of the burgeoning urban bourgeoisie in Sofia and other cities, critiquing Bulgarian subjectivity in jazz through the philosophical traditions to which the bourgeois studied and adhered is imperative.

In addition, understanding jazz in Bulgaria requires an analysis of the ways in Bulgarians have historically imagined Africans and African-Americans. Bulgaria's historical and geographical isolation from the social and cultural modes of exchange that make up the "Black Atlantic" (Gilroy 1993) means that further exploration is necessary into how the African-American body and mind were conceptualized by Bulgarians from the late-19th onward. This is not to say that we should ignore the African-American roots of jazz, or argue that there was no imagination of blackness associated with jazz in Bulgaria whatsoever. But it is essential, I argue, to understanding the development of

jazz in Bulgaria that we must take into account the isolation of Bulgarians from what Guthrie Ramsey calls "everyday blackness" (Ramsey 2004, 4). This isolation is not unique to Bulgaria, and has been discussed in several different ways in studies about jazz in other parts of the world. One approach used by scholars is to understand "everyday blackness" is as part of a subaltern imagination in which the everyday travails of minorities are posited as analogous to the historical suffering of African-Americans, implying a musical authenticity via social context (Titlestad 2004). Another strategy has been to construct an argument of "inauthenticity" in the jazz produced in various locales outside of the US, most often from Europe, though what constituted the finer points of this critical writing varied depending on time and place. In moving away from "everyday blackness" and the concept's role in subject construction within jazz historiography, I further emphasize the aspects of subject construction in jazz unique to Bulgarian history.

SUBJECTIVITY, THE ALLURE OF TRANSCENDENCE, AND JAZZ HISTORIOGRAPHY

Constructing an immutable, homogeneous subject, I argue, creates problems when the contextual heterogeneity of place, time, and subjectivity comes into play. The most salient contemporary articulation of these problems in jazz historiography was in Ken Burns' controversial 2001 documentary *Jazz*, a project that foregrounded many of Scott Deveaux's concerns about the canonization of jazz. The ten-episode, nineteen-hour PBS series' narrative was constructed with the purpose of, as Burns himself put it, "convinc[ing] someone in Dubuque [Iowa] that jazz is the Rosetta Stone of American culture" (Blumenthal 2000, 38). Burns' greatest coup during the production was securing

trumpeter/composer/bandleader Wynton Marsalis as a technical advisor. Marsalis, the director of the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra in New York and recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Music Composition for his epic jazz operetta *Blood on the Fields*, was at the time America's most publicly visible jazz musician and outspoken champion of the music's preservation. He was also, to his critics, a staunch neoclassicist whose criticisms of post-1960s jazz drew ire from critics, journalists, and musicians alike.[4] Marsalis and Burns' collaboration shared particular goal – the valorization of the "genius" jazz musician transcending the travails of American modernity, one of the narrative backbones of the jazz canon. Their dedication to this project was evident in the reverent, almost religious overtone through which Burns especially spoke of the documentary before its release. "I'm an evangelist" Burns stated, "and any evangelist will tell you that the *scripture* [emphasis mine] must prevail" (ibid. 42).

Critical and scholarly reception of the documentary was mixed, with one side praising the work for making jazz history relevant and accessible to new audiences, while the other condemning its limited scope and dogmatic reverence for the "masters" like Louis Armstrong and Duke Ellington. One of the more nuanced critiques of Burns' and Marsalis' romantic vision of the jazz musician was put forth by George Lipsitz in the 2004 essay collection *Uptown Conversation: The New Jazz Studies*. He utilizes the trope of "Darby Hicks," a fictional musician that bandstand veterans of Harlan Leonard's Territory Jazz Band would use in their interactions with younger musicians. "Hicks",

[4] For a perspective on Marsalis's career in the broader politics about jazz in the 1990s, see Davis 1997. For a comparison of Marsalis's rhetoric about jazz to that of Amiri Baraka in the 1960s, see Brown 2004. For an interview with Marsalis about his ideas and philosophies about jazz and music more broadly, see Elie 1990.

Lipsitz argues, served as both a disciplinary mechanism amongst the band's members and an ideal type against which musicians judged their craft – no matter how much one practiced or performed, "Darby Hicks" would always be a better player. He was part urban legend, part Weberian ideal type, and part spiritual embodiment of the potential in every young musician to achieve their potential in the face of social, cultural, and economic barriers.

For Lipsitz, Ken Burns' documentary has "more than a little of Darby Hicks in it" (Lipsitz 2004, 10). By this, he refers to the construction of a narrative that privileges particular modes of time, space, and being that separate "jazz" as a unique and homogeneous form of cultural expression. Specifically, Lipsitz is critical of the attempt by Burns and his colleagues to "compress the infinitely diverse and plural practices that make up the world of jazz into one time – modernity, one place – 'America,' and one subjectivity – the heroic artist who turns adversity and alienation into aesthetic triumph" (ibid. 10). Lipsitz readily admits that this strategy to celebrate the place of the African-American artist in the modern urban milieu is commendable and part of an intellectual tradition perpetuated through the works of Amiri Baraka, Albert Murray, and Houston Baker.[5] At the same time, he argues that it is also a mechanism that obscures broader social formations, practices, and community building that facilitated the building of such a romantic narrative.

[5] Specifically, Baraka (Leroi Jones)'s *Blues People* (1963), Murray's *Stompin' the Blues* (1976), and Baker's *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (1986) were all critical works in the post-Civil Rights construction of African-American modernity in the United States.

By 2004, this was certainly not a unique perspective on the documentary *Jazz* or the issue of canonizing jazz history.[6] Many of Lipsitz's criticisms were echoed by other scholars at the time of the documentary's release as well as in the following years. What makes Lipsitz's take unique, I argue, is that it was one of the first attempts to pin the crisis of canonization in jazz historiography more broadly as a problem of the subject and the way it has been constructed in the discourses on jazz. In Burns' "evangelical" attention toward Armstrong and Ellington as musical geniuses worthy of America's reverence, Lipsitz sees a paradoxical erasure of the social and personal particularities inherent in the formation of self.

Given the amount of literature devoted to the critiques of jazz's existence in "one time" and "one place," building upon Lipsitz's critical tone toward the construction of "one subjectivity," what he eloquently refers to as "Darby Hicks." However, instead of Lipsitz's neologism, given Darby Hicks' historical context within African-American performance mythology, I use a term that I call the "transcendental improvising subject." This phrase, I argue, best describes not only the phenomenon of "Darby Hicks" or "one subjectivity," but also incorporates the polyphony of voices and perspectives that come together to create the jazz musician as simultaneously subject and object in jazz discourse. These voices include those of the musicians themselves, critics, scholars, fans, record producers – anyone whose imaginations were complicit in constructing musicians into homogeneous objects of desire. The term also includes the social and historical forces that cast jazz as a syncretism of modernity, urbanness, blackness, and American

[6] Further exploration of the reception to the documentary *Jazz* can be found in Hersch 2001 and Pond 2003.

exceptionalism. This heroic narrative of the improvising subject transcended body, space, and desire to actualize a deeper need to transcend the social and cultural limitations in everyday life during in 20th century America.

My concern is not to question the historical validity of the "transcendental improvising subject" in jazz discourse and historiography. The romanticism of Burns, Marsalis, Albert Murray, Stanley Crouch, and others provides a valuable perspective on how ideas of the metaphysical have permeated African-American thought on the jazz since the 1960s. These writers and artists also provide an important voice in the ongoing debate over the validity of a "jazz community" in the United States and beyond. However, the limitations inherent in their perspectives must be recognized in order to more fully appreciate the heterogeneity of jazz throughout time and place.

The difficulty of the subject position endorsed by the *Jazz* documentary in encompassing the entirety of the experiences of other African-American jazz musicians is tackled in several different works. Lipsitz, for example, uses the career of Horace Tapscott and his deep reverence for the African-American sacred tradition in his "Darby Hicks" article (Lipsitz 2004). Other notable examples include Ronald Radano's take on multi-instrumentalist/composer/philosopher Anthony Braxton (Radano 1993), and Nicole Rustin and Sherrie Tucker's essay collection on women in jazz (Rustin and Tucker 2008).

The heterogeneity of jazz becomes even more pronounced as one moves further and further away from the modes of production, representation, and image that are framed as part of the modern experience of America. The centering of the "transcendental improvising subject" exclusively within such modes has the consequence

of pushing cultural expression outside the empirical purview of American life to position of marginality. This has been expressed most cogently with regard to jazz in the "unoriginality" or "inauthenticity" of performance stemming from outside of the experience of American modernity, as has been a common historical critique of jazz practiced outside of the borders of the United States.

George McKay addresses the construction of marginality with regard to the spread of jazz in Europe, and more specifically Great Britain, during the early-20th century. He argues that perception of "unoriginality" tied to early imitations by British jazz musicians stemmed from two facets. The first was white Britons' lionizing of jazz as a historical music of Black suffering, which "could itself have been part of its romance, a reductive strategy effectively confirming the social hierarchy and Black cultural practitioners' allotted place in it" (McKay 2005, 24). Such a position, McKay points out, drew suspicion from prominent Black musicians like Charles Mingus and Archie Shepp, that jazz had become "part of the aggrandizing narrative of America the cultural hegemon, not even comfortably celebrated as recognition of a unique [African-American] contribution to world culture" (ibid. 22). The second was the idea that jazz was experienced as "lingua Americana" via its primary dissemination as an instrumental form, making the music "not so much untranslatable as unnecessary to translate" from its American context (ibid. 25).

An essential point to understand from McKay's passage is that the tacit acceptance and complicity amongst Britons themselves in constructing a homogeneous subject position for the quintessential jazz musician had a profound effect on the attitudes

toward jazz in Great Britain. A similar phenomenon occurred in France during the 1920s and 1930s, when the clamoring amongst the French public for "authentic" Black American performers was so intense that "jazz" performed by Frenchmen was deemed to be inferior in quality (Jackson 2003). This fetish of "otherness" in all its forms opened the door for the likes of Django Rheinhardt, and other "Gypsy jazz" musicians who built sizable intranational and international reputations through not being perceived as "white" (Givan 2003). There are countless historical examples that can be used, from Asian-American musicians relating their struggles for integration and independence to avant-garde African-American musicians playing during the Civil Rights era (Wong 2004), to South African musicians drawing upon intimate transatlantic imagined connections to African-American musicians present and past (Coplan 1985; Erlmann 1991, 1996; Ballantine 2003).

Ultimately, none of these culturally and temporally specific constructions of jazz and its practitioners can be encompassed or understood through Burns' romantic narrative, nor the "transcendental improvising subject" that his narrative perpetuates. Yet, this reverence for the improviser above all is still prevalent throughout much of jazz scholarship, even in studies of jazz outside of the United States where such a homogeneous subject position is problematic. The question is how to move conceptually from the portrait of "Darby Hicks," toward a rhetoric for better understanding historically, socially, and affectively situated selves constantly constructed and reconstructed by everyday acts and ideas, of which jazz is but one part?

I argue that in order to understand the dynamics of this non-transcendent subjectivity it is necessary to further ascertain the relationship between subjectivity and transcendence in both Western metaphysics and in more specific usage by jazz scholars. This relationship has gone through many incarnations both in Kant's own writings and in others both within the German Idealist tradition and beyond.[7] But rather than partake in the exhaustive work of cataloguing all of these arguments here, I want specifically understand *why* such a subject position is alluring as a building block of the self, and what implication this has for jazz outside of its historical canon. In other words, what is it about the transcendental subject that prompted Walter Benjamin to famously call it a "most fearful drug…which we take in solitude" (Palladino 2002, 220)?

The "Transcendent Subject" of Western Philosophy

Danish philosopher Aren Grøn, in one of the few contemporary essays on the historical relationship expressly between transcendence and subjectivity, argues that the movement in the grounding of Western philosophy from the transcendent to the subjective in post-Cartesian metaphysics is best described as a space in which the relationship between the two is inherently dialectical. This phenomenon is what he terms the "double status of transcendence… that which is beyond the visible and temporal world of humans, but as such, it is to be reached by humans in a movement beyond themselves" (Grøn 2007, 11). The melding of these two into subjective unity created the

[7] For a detailed analysis of Kant's writings on the relationships between transcendental and empirical subjectivity, and the relationship of these to objective knowledge, see Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary*, pgs. 240-43.

backbone of Kantian metaphysics and the creation of the "transcendental subject," where "the human subject determines itself as a finite being: in determining itself it is both self-transcending and being transcended" (ibid. 19).

This conceptualization of unity in the "transcendental subject" as perpetuated through Kantian metaphysics has been a popular avenue of critique in late-19th and 20th philosophy and critical theory, spawning from Marx and Nietzsche but maturing within poststructuralist thought. However, such critiques of the transcendent "I" date back even further than the philosophical canon generally attributes, to the late-18th and early-19th centuries. As Andrew Bowie has convincingly argued, the subversion and critique of the Kantian metaphysics most fervently attributed to the work of Foucault, Derrida, and others was prefigured by writings on aesthetics by contemporaries of Kant, and even by Kant himself (Bowie 2004, 2). For example, Bowie shows that Jürgen Habermas's famous claim that post-metaphysical thinking would involve a "transferr[ence] from transcendental subjectivity to grammatical structures" was prefigured by F.D.E Schleiermacher's notion that language and grammatical structures were historically contingent, without an ahistorical relationship between language and being (ibid. 185). From the very beginning of the linkage between transcendence and the subject in post-Cartesian metaphysics, a critical discourse surrounding such a linkage was already well developed and employed, even prior the Nietzsche's late-19th century critiques of metaphysical thought that refocused subject formation within the body.

One noteworthy mid-century critique in this vein came via the writings of Søren Kierkegaard. In 1849's *The Sickness unto Death* (*Sygdommen til Døden*) Kierkegaard

argued that the "double movement of the self" in the act of subjective transcendence meant that the recognition of such transcendence required another yet form of transcendence. This new form of transcendence involved the reinscribing of the self as situated in his or her humanity in that there is a "seek[ing]…beyond themselves in the sense that they want to be more than human, or to be more human than others" (Grøn 2007, 25). Whether or not his kind of transcendence inevitably leads to "idolization or self-deification" as Kierkegaard states is up for debate. The importance in this conceptualization of "double movement" lies in that fact the transcendence can only be recognized as such through a reengagement with the body (ibid. 26). This conceptual move was very much the precursor for not only poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques of subjectivity, but also the idea that notions of transcendence are directly related to the biological processes of the human body.[8]

The relocation of transcendence into the body by Kierkegaard in the mid-19th century was a profound step for the entry of "jazz" as a medium for debates on the nature and possibility of a transcendental subject after the First World War. As the European

[8] Adrian Johnston, for example, draws upon the legacy of psychoanalysis and Slavoi Žižek's neo-Cartesian turn in locating the subject as a manifestation of *cogito*, Johnston argues that "cogito-like subjectivity ontogenetically emerges out of an originally corporeal condition as its anterior ground, although, once generated, this sort of subjectivity thereafter remains irreducible to its material sources" (Johnston 2008, xxiv). In other words, the concept of the transcendental subject, rather than being a manifestation of *a priori*, is formed out of the mechanisms and rhythms of the lived body. Johnston continues by arguing that even though *cogito* stems from the material body, their altered conditions of temporality allow for the engagement of "full-fledged subjectivity" only in moments in which they come together. When these moments do occur however, it creates a space through which subjectivity bridges a myriad of experiential and historical spheres. Ultimately, Johnston sees this temporal marriage of transcendental and material subject formation as a "non-reductive account of the subject's relation to its body; and how it enables an affirmation of subjective autonomy that nonetheless acknowledges the degree to which such freedom is also compromised by the individual's position with respect to determining biological, historical, and socio-psychical variables" (ibid. xxvi).

powers became more and more embroiled in the politics of Africa during the late-19th century, the social realities of such policies became more explicit in the philosophical construction of the self vetted through the colonial imagination. The "double movement of the self" that introduced the body as a transcendental frame melded together with European notions of an "African" aesthetics of the body to create an avenue of critique that borrowed from discourses on colonial raciality. A similar process had already begun to occur in the United States, where Ronald Radano shows that the "pre-discursive, 'spiritual' resonance" of African American music was melded together with alarm at the prospect of African-Americans entering the social and economic spaces of white society in the white imagination of "hot rhythm" (Radano 1999, 460-61). The adoption of blackface minstrelsy, ragtime, and (later) early jazz into the culture industry of capitalism starting in the late-19th century provided an avenue through which European postwar critical theorists such as Adorno, Horkheimer, and Benjamin could press Kierkegaard's critique of transcendence even further, into the realm of popular culture, mass media, and the crisis of art as unique in the age of mechanical reproduction.

The seemingly universal popularity of African American art forms, coupled with their dissemination through recordings and radio coincided with the deep questioning of the ontological status of art as immutably beautiful. Issues of the "transcendental subject" that had been questioned since the mid-19th century were pulled into this debate as well, often framed as the dissolution of the subject within the mechanizing processes of modernity. Sigfried Kracauer, for example used "jazz" in his 1925 essay "Travel and Dance" as a focal point through which to emphasize the disintegration of the

transcendental subject through the cooptation of the time and space such a subject required to orient knowledge of the world. Jazz, in his mind, thrust the subject into a one-dimensional existence empty of meaning, what he called a "tempo that is concerned with nothing but itself" (Kracauer 1995, 66; c.f. Burt 1998, 82). Such an existence perpetuated the subjugation of the individual into a "henchman of technological excesses," where subjects "do not become masters of the machine, but instead become machine-like" (ibid. 70).

In the same vein as Kracauer's critique of jazz came Theodor Adorno's now infamous perspective on jazz from his seminal "The Perennial Fashion" – that instead of liberating subjectivity, the Culture Industry stifled the subject by opening a pathway to the basest of libidinal desire through simulacra of "authentic" Black cultural forms – has become a flashpoint in the discourse on jazz studies. Some have argued that Adorno's limited knowledge of jazz falsely fueled his vitriol, though there are also arguments that he was far more educated about jazz than previously given credit for.[9] Whatever Adorno's faults on his empirical knowledge of jazz in the 1930s, the essay presents a remarkable perspective on the subject's relationship to power and the Cultural Industry. James J. Winchester effectively summarizes this take on subjectivity by stating that, for Adorno, "no artistic production is purely subjective…that which the subject expresses is…both personal and a product of the subject's social world" (Winchester 2002, 115).

[9] For more on Adorno's arguments against jazz and the backlash against his perspective by jazz scholars, see Buhler 2006 and Lewandowski 1996.

Adorno's broader point on the agent's role in the shaping of the subject within the Culture Industry seemingly closes the door on the issue of transcendence within the purview of Western metaphysics. At this same time, his embedding of subjectivity within the dialectical relationship between the subject and his/her "social world" opens up a different avenue for "transcendence" particular to the racial politics of post-WWII America and the aesthetic revolution of bebop. This type of transcendence moving between the metaphysical and the social is integral to understanding the turn towards the transcendental in the subject construction of jazz after the Second World War. In other words, understanding transcendence illuminates how the subject fetishizes jazz performance as a complex of "free individuals *beyond time* [emphasis original]…reified as a first principle from which both musicians and theorists find their ultimate social meaning" (Gebhardt 2001, 134).

Constructing the "Transcendental Subject" of the Jazz Canon

The African-American musical and intellectual community played an integral role in the first articulations of the "transcendental improvising subject" after the Second World War. Though I agree to an extent with Ingrid Monson's warning against "the equation of the disempowered…with the transcendental subject that is the object of Western philosophy's antihumanist critique" (Monson 1996, 213), I argue that this equation stems in part from positions perpetuated in the Black intellectual community, musicians, critics, and listeners. In the "modern" jazz musician these intellectuals found an ideal candidate to actualize the desire to create a socially and aesthetically modern,

immutable Black subject equal to (or even surpassing) its White counterpart. Monson herself alludes to such a point in her later work when she states that:

> To become one's own theorist – to have one's concept that in turn leads to the expression of one's own voice – was among the highest aesthetic ideals of the [jazz] art form. To become an improviser at this high level was to become aesthetically self-determining in a world in which other forms of self-determination or agency were more easily frustrated. This was an existential rather than a social self-determination, in other words (Monson 2007, 286).

Transcendence was a way to frame these "highest aesthetic ideals" as a kind of escapism from the travails that Black artists faced. But it also served to reinforce the context-specific importance of such subject construction, as empirical knowledge and experience were necessary as building blocks. George Lewis' brilliant work on the history of the AACM in Chicago is influential in this regard, showing the ways in which the collective strove to foster individual musical and aesthetic ambitions through mutual economic and spiritual support. An interview the author conducted with Muhal Richard Abrams, for example, shows one of the primary lessons taught in his composition classes at the collective during the 1960s. "We're listening" Abrams insisted, "to stuff that's around us, and then we can *transcend* [emphasis mine]. We're not captive to the usage of things around us, the empirical part" (Lewis 2008, 177). Abrams is vague on the specific usage of "transcend" in this case, but the allegory that he presents is clear. In transcending the basic usage of compositional technique, the self also transcends his or her environment and the sum of experiences.

In this way, the intuiting of subject positions within jazz performance was inevitably intertwined within the historical relationship between power and racism in

America. Adopting, even embracing, the meme of transcendence is perhaps unsurprising given the host of postcolonial literature dedicated to the adoption of language and rhetoric of Western philosophy in the service of subaltern motives (Appadurai 1990, 1996; Chatterjee 1993; Chakrabarty 2000). Henry Louis Gates and Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze highlight the dismissal on the part of many Enlightenment philosophers, including Kant and Hegel, of the possibility of a modern, thinking "African" subject (Gates 1986, 1989; Eze 2007). Paul Gilroy alludes to a similar phenomenon by highlighting the "strategic universalism" of Black discourses as a way to transcend the dehumanization of racism in everyday life (Gilroy 2000). The power of deconstructing racialized discourses within the language of Western thought became all the more powerful during the era of Civil Rights, when the postwar generation of African-American philosophers and aestheticians continued the process of building the Black modernness that began with the Harlem Renaissance during the 1920s. With regard to music, this process culminates in the writings of Amiri Baraka, who in *Blues People* (1963) *Black Music* (1967) argued that the power of the white-driven culture industry in America had deterred the development of an aestheticized Black subjectivity through blues and bebop by co-optation of such forms as rock 'n roll– a process he famously called "The Great Music Robbery" (Baraka 1967, 328).

The reclamation of a subject position which, to Baraka and others, had been co-opted over and over again by White Americans became an integral part of the valorization of bebop and hard bop by young African-American musicians like Marsalis during the 1980s. Specifically, I argue that the legacy Baraka, Marsalis, and others had

two distinct effects on the way improvisation, subjectivity, and jazz historiography are discursively constructed by scholars. The first was the development of a number of what I call "subjective recovery" projects of pre-WWII American artists who didn't have the benefit of Baraka, Whitney Balliett, Nat Hentoff, James Baldwin, or others to make their modernness transparent for a wider audience. A notable example of an artist whose "subjectivity" has received this treatment is Duke Ellington, who has been constructed though his own words and those of interlocutors as one of the first modern Black cosmopolitans in the history of American jazz (Collier 1987; Tucker 1995; Hasse 1995; Vail 2002; Lambert 1999). A host of others receiving similar treatment in recent books include WWI-era Creole professional musicians in New Orleans (Ake 2001), and tenor saxophonists Coleman Hawkins (Nesbitt 2003) and Lester Young (Porter 2005).

The second effect was the extension of such subjective recovery on jazz musicians outside of the United States, projects which have intensified since the mid-1990s following Deveaux's critique of the essentializing role of jazz historiography. Because this is a problem of historiography, it should come as no surprise that historians have played the leading role in these critiques. Books like E. Taylor Atkins's *Blue Nippon* (Japan), Mike Heffley's *Northern Sun/Southern Moon* (Germany), Bruce Johnson's *The Inaudible Music* (Australia), and Michael Titlestad's *Making the Changes* (South Africa) have provided an invaluable resource on the historical development of jazz in those countries. But all of these books share an articulation of the same kind of homogeneous, transcendent subjectivity for the musicians whom they discuss as Ake, Nesbitt, and Porter have in their works centered on America. Though the place and time

have changed, the story ostensibly sounds familiar – the improvising musician mediates the world away through performance, trumping everyday hardships and social barriers.

As examples, I want to highlight parts of three recent books in jazz scholarship that display some of the problems that I see in the conflation of a transcendental subject as the agent that mediates social and cultural realities embedded within jazz production. While these monographs are all shining examples of the potential that the discipline holds for the future, on some level they incur many of the same conceptual problems and are open to the same kinds of critiques as works like Ken Burns' *Jazz* regarding perpetuation of the "transcendental improvising subject."

Paul Austerlitz's *Jazz Consciousness* (2004) draws upon tenants of humanism in order to coherently link to together the author's experiences in African-American, Dominican, and Finnish traditions into a single experiential frame of mind. He posits a reinterpretation of W.E.B. Dubois's "double consciousness" as concept beyond its dialectical origins, one that encompasses both the lived realities of African-Americans in the US and the performance of their music and cultural forms throughout the world. At the crux of his argument is the idea that "musical consciousness" has a unique power to "unite things that are separated in nonmusical reality" (Austerlitz 2004, xiii). This consciousness manifests in the "jazz community" as a utopian space that cuts through racial, ethnic, gender, and class lines. Jazz becomes, he argues, a music through which individuals come together and share part of the "*creative tension* resulting from African-Americans' equivocal position both within and without Western modernity" (ibid. xvi). In other words, Austerlitz argues that some piece of African-American suffering can be

related to by all human beings in their own experiences, and jazz can be a prime platform for playing these "social ruptures" out during performance.

Ultimately, though, Austerlitz's neo-humanist frame for a "jazz community" is more an exploration of self than an archetype for community. Although he draws from African-American drummer and mentor Milford Graves' philosophies on music and human biorhythms a means of human togetherness, the ultimate source of Austerlitz's conceptual frame are his own experiences as an improviser. His approach is reminiscent of Steven Jeddeloh mixing together a combination of Husserlian *eidetic reduction* and "mindfulness" from the Samatha tradition in order to develop a frame for his own experiences of transcendence during improvisation (Jeddeloh 2006, 210). In much the same way Austerlitz conflates his experiences of self-transcendence into a rhetoric designed to mediate the gaps in jazz historiography and build a more inclusive notion of jazz apropos to the genre's current state. The subjective recovery in this work is, almost paradoxically, Austerlitz's own.

Titlestad's treatment of improvisation in *Making the Changes* shows a much different way of how such subjective recovery projects can be problematic. His book explores a phenomenon that he calls "transmigrated nomenclature," in which South African jazz musicians and audiences "name" local musicians after iconic African-American jazz musicians as a sign of legitimization and authenticity. His example is alto saxophonist Kippie Moeketsi, known popularly as the South African "Charlie Parker," an identity that, Titlestad argues, gave him a sense of belonging and connection that transcended the empirical realities of his life and career in apartheid South Africa. While

the phenomenon itself is a fascinating example of the historical imaginations that Black South Africans had for African-Americans going back the late-19th century, I would argue that it shows how pervasive, abstracting, and alluring the notion of a transcendental Black subject in the performance of jazz can be. *Becoming-Charlie Parker* is, for Titlestad, a privileged aesthetic space that taps into subjective desires to defer everyday suffering through multifaceted identities. Most importantly, Titlestad acknowledges the role in which listeners can play in making subjects, in this case imbuing a kind of immortality that belies the musician's material existence.

Though Titlestad acknowledges the specifically South African context in which the transcendence of "transmigrated nomenclature" is built, his valorization of this over the empirical experiences of those "named" musicians is problematic. Moeketsi's status as the "South African Charlie Parker" did little to extricate him from his career struggles throughout his life. Now that he is dead, such nomenclature may paradoxically obscure such struggles by conflating his imagined ego with that of Parker's. Transcendence, in this case, becomes a form of erasure even as it reifies the "lost" greatness of a musician whose social world limited his potential successes during his lifetime.

David Ake's book *Jazz Matters: Sound, Place, and Time Since Bebop* (2010) provides a third perspective linking jazz improvisation with the epistemology of transcendence explored out earlier. Ake's chapter on subjectivity through the music of John Coltrane presents a unique and recent attempt to engage directly with discourses on the Afro-centric transcendental improvising subject as the pinnacle of jazz expression. Ake instead offers the possibility of multiple subjectivities enacted through the music as

performance interpreted and mapped by the listener, subjectivities which he labels as *being*, *becoming*, and *transcendental*. These subjectivities are in fact "personas…[through which] listeners have heard in and imagined…their own of who Coltrane was as a person and what his performances mean" (Ake 2010, 17). While *being* and *becoming* are modes of self through which subjectivity maintains a temporal engagement in the present, *transcendental* captures the sense of the "musical persona's 'ego' giv[ing] way to a larger totality… when a musician blends in with fellow players such that one no longer perceives individual voices but rather a densely concentrated mass of sound" (ibid. 31). Ake's definition of the *transcendental* has the potential to move away from the notion of the subject as a thing-in-itself and toward a kind of collective totality grounded within the scope of intersubjective engagement. Instead he implies a Rousseau-esque pre-linguistic engagement in which sounding facilitates a collective aesthetic and understanding centered in the realm of the spiritual.

Ake's attempt to embed the notion of subjective multiplicity comes closest to capturing the polyphony of voices in the building of the improvised subject, as noted in his association of the transcendental to a space in which the "ego gives way to a larger totality." Where his notion of transcendence falls short, I argue, is that it lacks the complex engagement with the material and commodity affects that also construct the subject in ways that have little to do with the music itself or modes of listening within that musical context. Understanding exactly what these affects are, and how they are historically and geographically contextualized even as they maintain a veneer of "sameness" on a philosophical level, will be addressed later in the introduction. But

attempting to pin down these affects provides an excellent rejoinder against the construction of the homogeneous, ahistorical subject of "Darby Hicks."

The critique of the "transcendental improvising subject" is applicable to the Bulgarian case in terms of the lack of historical access to the African-American experience of modernity. Because of this relative isolation from "everyday blackness," a key component to the "transcendental improvising subject" is missing from the Bulgarian experience of modernity. This state leaves such a subject position inadequate for properly understanding the ways in which jazz musicians conceptualized themselves, and were conceptualized by others throughout Bulgaria's history. Elucidating the potential for alternative subjectivities for jazz in Bulgaria requires an understanding of the Bulgarian imagination of blackness, coupled with insight into the few accounts of the experiences of Africans and African-Americans in Bulgaria during the 20th century.

THE BULGARIAN IMAGINATION OF BLACKNESS

Relatively little available literature exists on the discourse about blackness with regards to Bulgaria in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. This is not surprising, however, given the relative isolation at that time from the global cycles of black culture via literature and mechanical reproduction. There is little evidence of widespread contact between African-Americans and Bulgarians prior to WWII, either in Bulgaria or abroad at the level of Western European nations or Russia/Soviet Union.[10] This is not to imply

[10] Unlike the Soviet Union, East Germany, Cuba, or China, Bulgaria didn't capture the gaze or imagination of the Cold War-era American public as an integral part of the "communist world." In fact, it can be argued that Bulgaria was almost wholly invisible to the American eye throughout most of the late-19th and

that there was *no* contact with or imagination about African-Americans whatsoever prior to communism, but these engagements were diffuse enough that the complexities of racial politics in the United States would have been relatively unknown to even the most cosmopolitan of Bulgarians.

There were a few notable avenues available to Bulgarians through which ideas about African-Americans could develop. Missionaries teaching at Robert College and the Theological Institute in Samokov likely communicated abolitionist ideals to Bulgarian students there in the 1860s and 1870s.[11] Literature was almost certainly another avenue, as novels like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1898) and Mark Twain's sixteen volume complete works (1911) were available even though they were not as widely read like novels from France and Russia (Klissourska 1991, 38). Bulgarians emigrating to the US at the turn of the century, settling in places like Granite City, Illinois and Stilton, Pennsylvania may have communicated everyday encounters with blacks to family back in

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20th centuries. The American ear, on the other hand, found an avenue of enchantment through the release of *Les Mystere des Vois Bulgares* in 1988, a recording of the state-run women's chorus whose melismatic close harmony vocal style and thoroughly arranged pieces were interpreted by Western audiences as an authentic expression of Bulgarian folk culture. The album won a Grammy for Best World Music Performance that year and remains to this day the only representation of Bulgarian music known to most Americans (Buchanan 1997). From the Bulgarian end, there were notable exceptions like Protestant missionaries commissioned by the American Board who started a series of literacy and educational programs in Bulgaria as early as 1858. But exceptions aside, it is not an overstatement to argue that the United States had the least amount of political and social influence on Bulgarian society of any major world power prior to 1944. Martin Herz, who was US Ambassador to Bulgaria from 1974-77, introduces his memoir by offhandedly quipping that "I owe my ambassadorial position, *unimportant as it may be* [emphasis mine], to merit and not to any political connection" (Herz 1981, 2). Though likely an innocuous statement, one could argue that Herz implies that Bulgaria is even below the threshold of American bureaucratic political nepotism.

[11] Within five years representatives of the American Board had opened the Collegiate and Theological Institute in Samokov, followed by Robert College in Istanbul in 1863. Robert College would become one of the most import educational institutions of the intelligentsia in pre-Liberation Bulgaria, as almost half of the school's alumni who graduated in the school's first 50 years of operation were Bulgarian (Grabill 1971, 53-54).

Bulgaria and played rags and negro spirituals in community brass bands (Gadzhev 2010, 19). Despite these examples, through the middle of the 20th century a vast majority of Bulgarians had little to no contact with African Americans and generally were unaware of the complex racial politics in the Western Hemisphere.

The few perspectives on African Americans from this period are largely accounts from travelers and students, some of whom were among the first Bulgarians to encounter blackface minstrelsy, and later early jazz. Aleko Konstantinov, a late-19th century writer, adventurer, and valuable window into the early Bulgarian bourgeois consciousness that I will reference several times in this work, gives us one of the few available accounts of African-Americans in Bulgarian writing. A passage in his travelogue *To Chicago and Back* (*Do Chikago i nazad*) describes passing through Washington D.C. before preparing for the long trip back across the Atlantic Ocean to Europe, and ultimately back to Bulgaria. This is the only place in the book, other than a brief mention of the atmosphere at a restaurant in New York City, where he discusses his thoughts about African-Americans, who he encounters for the first time whilst on his journey. It is worth quoting from the lengthy passage here, as it contains a fascinating array of veiled empathies, racial stereotypes, and perhaps insecurities about his own place within the bourgeois imagination in late-19th century Bulgaria.

> There are many blacks in Washington. We met as many Whites in the streets and trains as Blacks. Among the latter, there are well-to-do people who live comfortably. It's curious to watch the Blacks taking strolls at night, elegantly dressed, with top hats and gloves and particularly the women dressed mainly in neat white summer outfits of the latest fashion, with light bonnets, and their black mugs protruding in front, as on clothed monkeys. When they show their teeth and

> roll the whites of their eyes you could faint from the beauty (Konstantinov 2005, 78).

He continues by commenting more generally on the racial stratification of labor in 19th century America, ending with a premonition about the potential for African-Americans to carve out a more prominent voice in the future of American life.

> Every difficult and unpleasant job is unloaded on their backs. There are many occupations which the white Americans consider undignified of them, and these they assign to the Blacks. The Blacks have preference over the Whites only as waiters, footmen, and doormen. It is considered more "comme il faut" to see Blacks in these positions. Blacks serve in rich homes and in big restaurants. Blacks strive to be more like the Whites, but the latter strive to shun them, as they consider themselves to be higher beings. It is a great rarity for a White to marry a Black. Only extreme need or wealth can entice them. The Blacks have adapted to the American climate and are propagating quickly. In the United States, there are already 8 million and the proud Whites are afraid of the future, when the Blacks through their great fertility will gain formidable strength and have a meaningful voice in the decisions of the future of the States (ibid. 79).

Konstantinov's description is operating on two distinct levels. The first is the reinscription of the quasi-scientific language on race common in Europe starting in the late-18th century through use of phrases like "great fertility," "formidable strength," and "clothed monkeys" (see Eze 1997). This is unsurprising given, as I will argue in Chapter 1, the great familiarity with Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment writings that affluent Bulgarians like Konstantinov had through pursuing educational opportunities in Western Europe and Russia. The second level is the apparent reluctance to code himself as "white," and thus belonging to the superior social position of "white Americans." There are several possibilities as to why this may be the case that deserves further exploration at a later date. My interpretation of this passage is that Konstantinov sees himself as simply a voyeur of the American racial politics of the late-19th century, unable to make more

tangible statements through lack of context and experience, particularly with African-Americans. He also provides a first-hand account of potential strategies of interpretation other Bulgarians may have employed in similar situations confronted with the complexities of racial politics during that time.

In the late-19th and early-20th centuries, as blackface minstrelsy and gospel choirs spread the music of African Americans through Western Europe, Africa, and Asia, there is no evidence that any of these performers ever reached Bulgaria. While it is highly likely that Bulgarian students and travelers, like Konstantinov, were exposed to these performances in isolated instances, no available literature supports this hypothesis. The earliest known minstrel show in Bulgaria was not launched until the mid-1920s, when Pavel Abadzhiev and his orchestra began performing vaudeville routines in blackface in "Borisova Gardens" (*Borisova gradina*) in Sofia (Gadzhev 2010, 46). Even during the 1920s and 1930s, as African American bands began to take advantage of the mechanisms of travel technologies to play cities across the globe, very few saw Bulgaria as a potential destination.

In fact, available evidence suggests that there was only one African American group that visited Bulgaria prior to the 1970s. This notable exception was the orchestra of Pennsylvania native Sam Wooding, known as the "Chocolate Kiddies," which came to Sofia in early 1928 as part of the band's barnstorming tour of Eastern Europe. The group of thirty-five African American dancers, singers, and instrumentalists were originally booked by a Russian émigré in Harlem to help fill the burgeoning European market for "jazz". Arriving in Germany in 1924, the "Chocolate Kiddies" spent the next two years

playing venues from Spain to Turkey, finding their way to Moscow in February 1926. The ensemble played to packed houses of Soviet elites at venues like the Moscow Circus and the Leningrad Music Hall to see what was billed as "Negro operetta." Wooding's 1928 tour brought him to Sofia between engagements in Budapest and Istanbul, where his act was considered by elite Sofians to be an "exotic attraction" (ibid. 45). However rare it was to see an "authentic" ensemble of African Americans in Sofia at that time, the music heard was far from a manifestation of the "hot" jazz of New Orleans and Chicago. The perception about Wooding's musical aesthetic was that it drew more from White salon jazz king Paul Whiteman than artists such as Louis Armstrong. Saxophonist Sidney Bechet famously called Wooding's repertoire "Sears Roebuck things," while the reviewer for Soviet newspaper *Izvestiia* declared that the "Chocolate Kiddies" sounded like an Anglo-German cabaret band that was "not at all hot or eccentric" (Starr 2004, 54-7).

As communism began to spread from the Soviet Union through Eastern Europe in the first half of the 20th century, ideas about the role of Africans and African Americans as a revolutionary proletariat suffering from centuries of White racism began to take shape. Starting in the late-1920s, committees were formed for the purpose of ascertaining the potential for infiltrating communities of racial and ethnic minorities around the world in an attempt to provoke class warfare and revolt against dominant European colonial and capitalist institutions. The Soviet commitment to such a policy in the early years of Stalin was captured in a 1928 treatise entitled "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in Colonial and Semi-Colonial Countries" outlined the

establishment of a Black Republic in the American South that stretched from Virginia to Texas, with help from the American Communist Party. The crux of the document, co-authored by Stalin himself, rested on the idea that Southern Blacks represented a distinct nationality, separate from both Whites and middle-class urban African-Americans from northern cities. This policy was quickly scrapped after the recognition of the Soviet Union by President Roosevelt, remaining only as what S. Frederick Starr calls "the brainchild of sociologists in Moscow who had been no closer to America than the Lenin Library" (ibid. 102-3).

Whatever pipe dream the construction of a socialist republic in the American South may have been, the legacy of such policy remained in the attempt by the Soviets to use racial strife in the United States as propaganda against capitalism. After 1947, this became one of the Bulgarian Communist Party's (BCP) mantras as well. Throughout the next two decades, the BCP attempted to capitalize upon this propaganda in several ways. Party members visiting Western countries, especially the US, were encouraged to emphasize both class *and* racial inequities observed during their visits, conflating the two together whenever possible. Bulgaria also participated in a Soviet project to educate African youth in universities throughout the Eastern Bloc, in an attempt to infuse them with both technical training and socialist ideals to ferment the possibility of communist uprisings against European colonial authorities.

Unfortunately for these African students, the communist rhetoric that imagined a Black proletariat joining the post-racial socialist brotherhood during the 1960s stood at odds with the actual everyday treatment of the few Blacks living within Bulgaria's

borders at that time. A special report entitled "African students at Iron Curtain schools flee a hateful epithet: '*Cherni Maimuni'* [Black Monkeys]" in the March 15th, 1963 issue of *Life* magazine chronicled the experiences of 200 Ghanaian college students enrolled at Sofia University the previous year. The everyday life in Sofia they reported to the press upon fleeing to Amsterdam was harrowing. The group was sequestered in a separate dormitory, served inadequate food, and was under constant surveillance by university authorities. On the city streets, the students were scoffed at by locales, who asked questions and made statements embodying the worst racial stereotypes and essentialisms imaginable, that they lived in the jungle or all carried venereal disease.[12] Catcalls of "Black monkeys" were often leveled at them in disgust by passing Bulgarians. Violence involving the students became more and more common. A bar fight started when a Ghanaian student started dancing with a Bulgarian girl resulted in the arrest of six African students but no Bulgarians. Even leaving the country proved to be difficult – after marching to the Ministry of Culture to demand exit visas and plane tickets, the group was met on the street by 600 armed police, resulting in violence in which several students were injured. The students were granted their request the following day only after the direct involvement of the Ghanaian embassy (Bonfante 1963, 19).[13]

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[12] The students did say that experiences outside of the city were generally better. They were still objects of curiosity, but never subjected to the same racial epithets that they were in Sofia. Edwin Amonoo, a Ghanaian economics student, reminisced that "it was as if they had not learned about discrimination yet. With them, it was more curiosity than anything else. It was amusing, too. They had never seen black people before. Children would hide, then look at us secretly, with their hands up to their faces…It was like when we ourselves were young in Africa. When we saw our first white man, it was a strange experience" (ibid. 19).

[13] A similar incident occurred in 1965, when 15 Sudanese students also quit their studies at Sofia University and fled to Athens, documented in issue 24 of the newsletter of the League for the Liberation of the Peoples of the USSR.

The attitudes of urban Bulgarians were often reflected in the party bureaucracy, albeit in a less overt and directly confrontational fashion, and occasionally displayed a historically abstract conceptualization of the Black body in policies on aesthetics. An example is shown via a passage from writer Georgi Markov's memoir *The Truth That Killed*, which stands as one of the most detailed accounts of everyday life for the *intelligentsia* in Bulgaria under the first twenty years of communist rule.[14] He described an incident involving a meeting in the Ministry of Culture that took place sometime in the mid 1960s involving whether or not to invite Louis Armstrong to play in Bulgaria after the conclusion of his Eastern European tour.[15]

> His last stop was Bucharest. The Bulgarian concert management knew of the huge interest in Armstrong, who was an idol of Bulgarian youth, and so decided to invite the great musician to give a few concerts in Bulgaria. It was explained to the top Party leaders that Armstrong was black and that his music should be understood as an expression of the wretched condition of negroes in the United States. The leaders nodded in agreement, and everything seemed in order, until someone remembered Armstrong's hoarse seductive voice and said: 'All right, do invite him – but only on condition that he plays and doesn't sing.'
>
> And, to justify himself, he quoted the writer Emilian Stanev who once said (I was present) that when he heard Armstrong's voice, he had the nightmarish feeling of terrible hands stretching out in the night to grab him by the throat…. Of course, Armstrong declined the invitation. And the puny throat of the writer was saved" (Markov 2004, 198).

The abstraction of Armstrong as a voice, whose affect was of "terrible hands stretching out in the night to grab [one] by the throat" speaks to a specifically Bulgarian

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[14] Markov's reputation in Bulgaria and Western Europe, as well as his ultimate fate, will be discussed at length in Chapter 2.

[15] This tour, which covered Prague, Leipzig, East Berlin, West Berlin, Frankfurt, Bucharest, Belgrade, Zagreb, Liubljana, back to East Berlin, Magdeburg, Erfurt, Schwerin, and East Berlin a third time, occurred over a four week period in the Spring of 1965. It was not one of the jazz tours sponsored by the US State Department so common during that period, according to documentation supplied by Ingrid Monson in her book *Freedom Sounds* (2007, 125).

historicization about jazz. Markov combines the multivalent coding of "jazz" as simultaneously "Western" and "bourgeois" common in communist Bulgaria (see Chapters 2 and 3), with more broadly held European imaginations of the Black body and its potential carnal power over the mind. Notably missing is Konstantinov's nuanced empathy for the African-American position in White America, which by the 1960s had been folded into the pan-communist ideological position that used racism against the capitalist world. At that time, such self-expression in writing was difficult for Bulgarians to move past state censorship, so it was extraordinarily rare for such perspectives to be published if they were written at all.

How much and in what way these attitudes about blackness have changed in the post-communist period is difficult to gauge. My own experiences in Bulgaria since the mid-2000s lead me to believe that the prevalence of Western popular media such as films, television shows, recordings have made images of African-Americans more accessible that at any other time in Bulgaria's history. As in many places throughout the world, hip-hop culture has found a sizeable audience amongst Bulgarian youth and influences the aesthetic of the *pop folk* industry to some extent, though some of the more nuanced social meanings of the African-American experience are lost (Levy 2001). As of yet, there has been no comprehensive study done on institutional and public reception of Africans or African-Americans in Bulgaria under capitalism. The potential for such a study, though, can be glimpsed through isolated instances such as the comparison of institutional racism against the Roma in Bulgaria with similar structures historically employed against African-Americans in the United States (Creed 2011, 176) and research

into the disproportionate percentage of traffic stops against Blacks by the Bulgarian state police since 2000 (Gounev, Bezov, Dimov, and Yourdanva 2006).

The historically diffuse imagination of blackness amongst Bulgarians, coupled with Stuart Hall's declaration of the "end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject," further illustrate the need to distance notions of subjectivity relevant to jazz in Bulgaria away from the "transcendental improvising subject."[16] As an alternative I argue for the re-centering of subject construction through concepts that better articulate the complex historical and material forces complicit in the fractured nature of Bulgarian subjectivity. Throughout this work, I refer to these forces broadly as *fascination* and *boredom.*

AFFECTING THE SUBJECT: FASCINATION AND BOREDOM

In light of my thorough critique of the validity of the "transcendental improvising subject" for framing subjectivity in jazz, I posit *fascination* and *boredom* as two alternative concepts that better articulate the fractured nature of subject construction in Bulgaria. As Western philosophy's titular poles of affect and being, I argue that *fascination* and *boredom* provide a bridge in understanding subject construction between neo-Kantian transcendence and a plethora of everyday affects that bind the subject within a historical field. Moving the center of subject construction from transcendence into

[16] Hall essentially argues that this "end of innocence" is in the realization that black subject positions are in fact extraordinarily diverse and reflect the notion of black not as biological, but as a category that is "politically and culturally constructed" (Hall 1992, 33). Hutnyk's response is to declare this argument "banal," offering that "what now needs to be debated is whether or not this recognition of the *constructed*-ness of the category 'black'…is any less constructed than any other categories, and if so, what it means to become less 'innocent' and 'essentialist' (Hutnyk 2000, 33-34).

material and historical fields allows a better understanding of how agency is enacted in everyday terms. Instead of abstracting the subject into a homogenous and imagined construct, *fascination* and *boredom* provide avenues for exploring a more historical, material, and experiential subjective engagement with modernity. When looked at in particular historical and social contexts, like those in Bulgaria, *fascination* and *boredom* encompass the decisions subjects make about their lives, as well as the underlying structures that influence those decisions. In other words, *fascination* and *boredom* provide conceptual fields through which the subject acts as an agent against the social and political forces that bind subjects to a will to power.

My incorporation of *fascination* and *boredom* as non-transcendental frames for subjective experience is not intended as a wholesale replacement for transcendence as the subjective *modus operandi* of jazz discourse and historiography. Nor are these concepts necessarily positioned as "structures of feeling," to borrow from Raymond Williams' terminology. Rather, I see them as ontological and epistemological "lines of flight" that can be traced through the history of jazz in Bulgaria. *Fascination* and *boredom* facilitate the integration of jazz's presence within the complex construction of modernity amongst Bulgarians from the 1878 Liberation from the Ottoman Empire until the present. Most importantly, *fascination* and *boredom* help to facilitate an understanding of the unique ways in which jazz has framed (and been framed by) its practitioners and listeners that can alleviate some of the excessive periodization of modern Bulgarian history by scholars. For all of the attempts to canonize the uniqueness of the communist takeover of 1944, the democratic reforms of 1989, and other watershed moments in the history of the

Bulgarian state, the social, economic, and cultural ties that moved through those periods tend to be deemphasized. In fact, despite difficulties and occasional hardships jazz musicians and listeners have remained active throughout these moments. Tracing such continuities throughout the 20th and 21st centuries allows for a unique perspective on the building of modern Bulgaria, and how many of the same issues confronting its citizens after the First World War are still quite relevant nearly one hundred years later.

Properly foregrounding the use of *fascination* and *boredom* throughout the dissertation requires understanding the epistemology of each concept. While elucidating some of the finer points in the historical usage of each concept, I also provide a brief explanation of the term's appearance and usage in every chapter.

Fascination

Fascination's rather complex epistemology is rooted in the various discourses on magic in Western modernity. Simon During's book *Modern Enchantments* provides one of the most detailed analyses in the diverse and multifaceted ways in which the concept of magic has been historically constructed. Corresponding with theories and writings on natural or supernatural magic, he argues, was a wholly modern conceptualization that ranged from performative magic (like hypnosis or sleight of hand tricks) to politically or socially affective magic. It also includes a host of "magic words" that first associated with the supernatural and later appropriated by rationalized culture in the West as ways to fashion otherness in certain contexts. During explains that:

> one of the ways in which modern culture has celebrated (and criticized) itself is by describing and presenting itself through a rich vocabulary of inherited magic words…. The spread of this magic discourse has been neglected by cultural

> theorists. Yet it has played a particularly important role when supplementing, or substituting for, such established aesthetic concepts as the sublime and the beautiful, and typically when an object of praise is deemed too slight or fugitive to justify inclusion in such aesthetic categories (During 2002, 39-41).

One of these words having its own particular historical trajectory is that of "fascination." In Antiquity and pre-modern Europe, fascination referred to someone being affected by magic spells, and later specifically to being charmed by the eyes of a snake or a woman. By the late 18th or early 19th century, fascination was thought of in more rational terms. Modern fascination encompassed an act by which an object of desire "fascinates" through the manipulation of magnetic fields or electricity, affecting the body of the fascinated and leaving him/her unable to resist. In various historical incarnations, then, fascination seems to be tied into affect between subject and object, removing the object of their reasoning faculties. The discourse that includes animals, women, and those in touch with a wellspring of fascinating power like magicians or snake charmers implies a notion of exoticism that links fascination with pre-modernness.

John B. Newman's *Fascination, or The Philosophy of Charming* (1847) stands as one of the first attempts to construct on ontology of fascination that chronicles this shift in the discourse from the magical to the rational. The book frames a series of ten conversations between a doctor and a woman in which he explains to her the history of fascination. These conversations are precipitated by the patient's friends, who try to convince her that her "illness" was really one of the imagination, spawned by nervousness. In order to ease her conscience about the effectiveness of his practice, the doctor use hypnosis to treat her, and takes her through the entire history of applications of

fascination from animals (particularly snakes), through Biblical manifestations, non-Western applications, and finally a history of medical incarnations of fascination in the West. Although the text itself is awash with gender and racial essentialisms endemic to that particular place and time, these writings provide a justification for conceptualizing fascination in rational terms, furthering the mid-19th project of explaining the pre-modern world away through modern systems of knowledge.

By the turn of the century, the conflation of fascination and hypnosis that was common in the mid-19th had abated, and fascination became more directly associated with magnetism by the scientific community. A 1908 treatise on the act of fascination by William Walker Atkinson, penned as a "course of lessons on mental vibrations, psychic influence, personal magnetism, fascination, psychic self-protection, etc….", describes fascination as "the manifestation of Mental Influence when two persons are together, without passes or the usual hypnotic methods" (Atkinson 1908, 42). He further divides fascination into related fields such as "Personal Magnetism" and "Charming," that emphasize the passive affective dimensions of fascination, rather than the direct "will" to fascinate transferred from one subject to another. In other words, the conceptual shift comes from one being fascinating, as opposed to fascinating another through force of will. The shift from active to passive affectation is significant insofar that it shifts the focus of critical inquiry from intuiting the motives of the fascinator to more broadly ascertaining the dynamics and power of the entire "field" of fascination as metaphysical and historical.

After the First World War, the discourse on fascination entered the realm of critical theory in the form of the mediation of the dichotomy between the magical and the rational. Adorno and Horkheimer show that rationality itself becomes enchanted through the fetishization of instrumental reason in Western philosophy, demonstrated through German fascism's use of science and high art as a means of ideological control (Adorno and Horkheimer 1997). At the same time, Claude Levi-Strauss shows how shamanistic ritual maintains its magical properties within culture whilst the spectacle itself is exposed as a series of performance acts. Hence while the notion of the rational subject is destabilized, other avenues of subjective engagement open within the sphere of magic, including fascination (Levi-Strauss 1963).

Indeed, the discourse on fascination has found its most ardent historical applications in the arena of subject formation, specifically in terms of defining the specific relationships with the object and self-objectification. Jacques Lacan saw fascination as essential in the formation and actualization of the ego (Lacan 1988), but also as a space in which subjects see themselves in objectified form through the auto-mechanisms of the machine (Nusselder 2009, 88). Maurice Blanchot constructed fascination as an inability to perceive objects as objects, forcing the subject to abandon its "sensory" nature and retreat into a space of solitude (Blanchot 1989, 32-33). Jean-Paul Sartre saw fascination as an immediate knowledge of the object against a background of profound emptiness (Sartre 2001, 153). For John Gregg, fascination breaks down "the distinction between interiority and exteriority" and makes artists "give themselves up to the image" (Gregg 1994, 29). Sarah Ahmed, from the lens of feminism and

poststructualism, follows Deleuze and Guattari in seeing fascination as a "language of becoming" where otherness is contextualized within multiplicities both inside and outside of the self (Ahmed 1998, 72). Arthur Kroker and David Cook saw the "fascination of capitalism" as one that thrived on difference as a process of recuperation or "recyclage" of the nostalgic (Kroker and Cook 1986, 20). Specifically with regard to the arts, William J. Kennedy, following Kant's notion of interest as satisfaction in the object-as-art, posits fascination as an aesthetic response on the part of the audience to engage with the meaning of the work (Kennedy 1997, 48). Mirjana Laušević focuses this idea of audience and meaning more specifically within music, citing the fascination of members of the American Balkan music and dance scene as both the "desire to possess…'objects' [songs, costumes, instruments]" and the desire to engage with "the world" in which they are fascinated (Laušević 2007, 35).

Oliver Harris's work in literary and film criticism is one of the few attempts to ground fascination both historically and materially. In the area of film, he argues that 1940s noir like Howard Hawks' *The Big* Sleep was an object of fascination for viewers, yet little has been done to extrapolate the dynamics of such fascination outside the narrative of the films themselves. Here he draws on Benjamin's notion that "historical knowledge does not require 'the rigorous, objective contemplative gaze' but demands first a recognition of our blindness" (Harris 2003b, 16). Blindness, or rather any conception of absence, is used to construct forms of knowledge that lay "outside of history, but historically so" (ibid. 16). I take this to mean that fascination, as an array of relationships between subject and object, centers desire in a particular historical moment.

Ultimately, this pulls fascination out of its homogenous, psychoanalytic root and makes it into something material that is mediated by time, place, medium, and subjective positionality. This is a meme that continues in his writing about William S. Burroughs, which deals more specifically with the fascinating relationship between author and reader, and how the reader imagines the author's body and mind through the physicality of text.

My own use of fascination draws from many different aspects of this discourse, revolving centrally around elucidating subjective desires, anxieties, and actions at different points in modern Bulgaria's history. Understanding these aspects through fascination helps facilitate comprehension of the sympathetic resonance between jazz and subjectivity in Bulgaria. In Chapter 1, I argue that fascination is central to the *becoming* of the bourgeois subject after the 1878 liberation from the Ottoman Empire. A new class of educated, cosmopolitan Bulgarians oscillated between simultaneously being European and self-orientalizing during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Their actions speak to the complex historical and social codes that fed into a class-centric subject formation during this time. In Chapter 3, fascination becomes imbricated in the Bulgarian imagination and idealization of life in the West through consumption of cultural objects and commodities. Simultaneously, the BCP attempted to co-opt the public fascination with those objects and commodities by cleansing them of their "bourgeois" aura and incorporating them into the socialist milieu. In Chapter 6, fascination is utilized as a critical device in the critique of jazz historiography's hegemonic construction of insider knowledge amongst musicians. Fascination underscores the elucidation of the magical

components of such knowledge, centering the question of why musicians collaborate together away from engaging with the object of desire.

Boredom

The discourse on boredom presents is multifaceted, undertaking various dystopic and redemptive trajectories in the hands of various writers. Kierkegaard, for example, famously called boredom (via idleness) "a root of all evil" (Kierkegaard 1992, 230). From another perspective comes Heidegger, who saw boredom the fundamental "mood" of modern life through which all humans much reach its precipice in order to open the path to new experience in modernity (Heidegger 1995). The relationship between boredom and modernity, and what it means to be bored in the context of modernness, was constantly reconceptualized between internal subjective malaise and external affective factors. Reconciling boredom's place within modernity has been one of the challenges in writing on boredom, and is part of the reason why it has been virtually ignored in anthropology and similar social sciences.[17] Despite the long and fractured engagement in philosophy and literature with boredom, there have been a few notable attempts to chart boredom's ontological formation in Western literature and philosophy (Kuhn 1976, Goodstein 2004, Svendsen 2005, LaMarche 2001). The most important distinction made about boredom that all four of these texts share is the notion that boredom is not solely

[17] The few notable exceptions include Michael Taussig's *My Cocaine Museum* has a chapter about boredom that questions its lack of application as a way to understand perceptions of time and space amongst Third World postcolonial subjects. Yasmine Mushbarash's article *Boredom, Time, and Modernity: An Example from Aboriginal Australia*, critiques the idea the boredom is solely a phenomenon of Western subjectivity and shows how an Aboriginal settlement in Yuendumu developed a notion of boredom through colonial social apparatuses and employ it as a kind of *habitus*.

the purview of either the subject or the outside world, but a phenomenon that is historically and socially contextualized.

Reinhardt Kuhn's *The Demon of Noontide* (1976) was one of the first attempts to trace notions of boredom through historical manifestations such as *melancholia* in Hellenic Greece, *taedium vitae* of Imperial Rome, Thomas Aquinas's *acedia*, and Blaise Pascal's *ennui*.[18] Using Western literature as his point of analysis, Kuhn argues that what became known as boredom was a universal condition of the human spirit through which writing served as both chronicle and antidote in a "monumental struggle against the power of nothingness…[where] man defines himself and asserts his humanity" (Kuhn 1976, 378). His argument casts boredom as an ever-changing same, adopting different guises at different points in history and in different locales, yet still representing the precipice into nihilism which humans must avoid.

Barbara Goodstein's critique of Kuhn's universalized historicism in *Experience Without Qualities* (2004) opens up the possibility for boredom as something historically and socially contextualized, formed through ideas of the subject's relationship with his or her circumstances. For Goodstein, the key to understanding boredom lies not in seeing it as an ever-changing same, but rather as a series of "discursive continuities and rhetorical transformations within the historical field of reflection on subjective experience"

[18] *Acedia* was defined by Aquinas as the refusal of divine sources of joy, which is augmented by the medieval Christian notion that conflated *acedia* with sloth. Pascal was the first to divorce *acedia* from Christianity by making it a fundamental disposition of human existence not directly connected to God, which he referred to as *ennui*. This secular face to *ennui* was spread throughout the Middle Ages by the stories of the troubadours, and later through literature. It was at this point that *acedia*, *melancholia*, and *ennui* became democratized and conflated, setting the ground for the modern discourse on boredom starting in the late-18th century (Goodstein 2004, 36-7).

(Goodstein 2004, 35). The inability to see boredom outside of an ahistorical frame is hence due to "the historical particularity of the vision of subjectivity and truth embedded in its purportedly universal perspective on subjective malaise" (ibid. 35). This ahistorical universalism is also pulled apart in Kuhn's own narrative insofar as there is a clear historical dichotomy between the "religious" *ennui* that culminates with Pascal, and the "secular" *ennui* of the European royal courts that codified in the late-18th century.

As opposed to Kuhn's dichotomy, Goodstein offers a "set of variations within a common discourse on subjective experience" (ibid. 40). The key to realizing any notion of an ontology of boredom, she argues, rests in viewing it as a series of historically-specific perspectives bound together in the general reflection on malaise and subjective experience. That these wide-ranging discourses on a particular layer of subjectivity (*acedia*, *melancholia*, *ennui*, et al…) would converge into boredom at the end of the Enlightenment was reflective of Hegel's relation between death and absolute freedom, which set the experience of boredom as "the expression of the modern subject's genuine aloneness in a world without a divine referent…the Janus face of absolute freedom" (ibid. 43). At this point, Goodstein argues, boredom had fully become a way of expressing ones disposition within a particular temporal space, fully within the historical and cultural transformations of the time. Fredric Jameson shared such dispositional thinking in relation to the postmodern context of boredom in his work *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism.* Jameson posits boredom as both:

> an aesthetic response and a phenomenological problem…taken not so much as an objective property of things and works but rather as a response to the blockage of energies (whether those be grasped in terms of desire or of praxis). Boredom then

> becomes interesting as a reaction to situations of paralysis and, no doubt, as a defense mechanism or avoidance behavior (Jameson 1991, 71-72).

Jameson brings forth the question of subjective agency by casting boredom as "defense mechanism" or "avoidance" behavior. The idea of boredom as something that can be enacted or engaged with at will, as opposed to something affectively impressed upon the subject, creates a potentially positive space for boredom. Jameson's proposal to embrace boredom and its objects as a means for subverting structures and ideologies in the everyday thus pushes boredom beyond Heidegger's notion that boredom shows the precipice of subjective awareness.

To move beyond Jameson's theorization of boredom as a "defense mechanism" positions boredom to potentially provide an avenue of subjective resistance against the forces of modern life. Enacting boredom in this way, I argue, embeds the subject within a particular historical and social field that perfectly articulates many of the emergent social consciousnesses surrounding the rise of jazz in Bulgaria during the 20th century. In Chapter 1, I discuss the role of boredom as a form of *blasé* through which the interwar bourgeoisie in Bulgaria used popular culture to detach themselves from the fervent complex of identity politics that constituted a great deal of their class consciousness before 1918. In Chapter 3, I discuss boredom as a form of being "outside" (*vnye*), a concept borrowed from Alexei Yurchak's Soviet Union in which Bulgarian subjects engage with boredom to place themselves outside of the hegemonic rhetoric and practice of communist ideology in everyday life. Expanding on Yurchak, In Chapter 4 I argue for the conceptualization of boredom as an affect of the urban milieu, in which subjects

engage with and perform forms of resistance against the encroachment of commodity fetishism. These arrays of resistance and their epistemological links to other extrapolations of boredom in Western thought, such as Georg Simmel's urban *blasé* and Walter Benjamin's material boredom, will provide a frame through which to understand some of the positions of musicians in post-communist Bulgaria.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In Part I I historically contextualize the broader issues that surrounded the development of jazz in Bulgaria during the first half of the 20th century. This is intended to set jazz within various historical moments in Bulgaria, moments in which the genre was a part of social changes that greatly affected both the musicians playing it, audiences listening to it, and the first instances of the state attempting to limit its influence amongst musicians and Bulgarian citizens.

Chapter 1 explores the building of bourgeois lifestyles in Bulgaria in the late-19th and early-20th centuries in order to better understand the social milieus through which jazz developed in Bulgaria during that time. What is so distinct about jazz's emergence in Bulgaria, as opposed to other parts of Europe, is that its adoption wasn't indicative of an imagination specifically about the United States generally, or African Americans in particular. Rather, jazz and the leisure culture that perpetuated it in Sofia and other cities were integrally tied into fractured and changing orders of knowledge, power, and being, as Bulgarians looked to find their place amongst Europe and Europeans during the fifty or so years post Liberation. More specifically, the long historical relationship between ideas of *becoming-bourgeois*, *becoming-European*, and *becoming-Oriental* reaches a

critical mass in the years after the First World War. These variations of early bourgeois consciousness were expressed in ideas about education, politics, national consciousness, urban development, and literature. In the context of 1930s Bulgaria, jazz was more than simply a mimetic gesture toward the European city and its modern urban delights. It was part of a more general subjective detachment from the desires and anxieties inherent in the occidental/oriental divide that dominated ideas of Bulgarian-ness in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. In exploring different historical manifestations of "bourgeois," "Europe," and "Orient," I demonstrate how notions of subjectivity were always contested, and never completely stable. Within this ontological construction, I argue, playing and listening to jazz was ultimately a manifestation of *blasé*, the point at which this fractured subjectivity itself became a form of detachment.

In Chapter 2 I explore jazz's place in the early years of the communist regime, particularly after the party consolidated power in 1947 and began an intense period of Stalinist-style purges of the urban intelligentsia that lasted until around 1953. Jazz musicians were sent to prison and, in some cases, murdered as the potentially burgeoning pre-war popular music cultural was slowly dismantled through communist hegemony. I argue that the assault on prewar bourgeois culture must be seen not just in the physical and emotional trauma heaped upon musicians like Asen Ovcharov, Alexander Nikolov (Sasho Sladura), and others, but within the aims of regime ideology towards the inter-war urban subject. One of the goals of the Chervenkov regime (1947-53) was to move against the bourgeois self-reflective subject position and its manifestations in literature, art, and music, evident in forms such as autobiography and travelogue. This led to a

particular form of subjective violence that was the fate of many of the first generation of Bulgarian jazz musicians who remained after the Second World War. I explore how this trauma has been aestheticized within a statue of Sladura, erected in 2002, and its role as an allegory for the perceived loss of bourgeois self-expression amongst the intelligentsia in early communist Bulgaria, and its possibilities for renewal in the years after post-communism.

In Chapter 3 I examine the associations between the BCP and Bulgaria's burgeoning youth culture surrounding jazz during the 1960s. Early in the decade, a relative cultural thaw under Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov allowed for the reemergence of the artistic intelligentsia that had been thoroughly oppressed during the early-1950s. At issue is a complex conflict in Bulgaria during this time between seeing jazz as a platform for aesthetic subjective expression and incorporating jazz within the ideological framework of the arts and their state-imposed function towards the growth of society as a whole. This conflict is traced primarily through the formation of the *Estraden Orkestŭr na Bŭlgarskoto Radio i Televiziya* (EOBRT), created in 1960 as the official State ensemble devoted to the recording and performance of Western popular music and jazz. While under the direction of Leviev between 1962 and 1966, the EOBRT incorporated various original compositions drawing upon Bulgarian folk material, hailed as some of the first instances of "ethno-jazz" (*etnodzhaz*). I argue that Leviev's compositions must be seen not only as a subtle political move to establish a degree of artistic autonomy, but also as a paradoxical reinscription of that same communist aesthetic related to the BCP's desire to create a truly "Bulgarian" popular music. This relationship between artistic

autonomy and the actualization of the moral, socialist subject was influenced by Zhivkov's suppression of free expression in reaction to Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia. Zhivkov's actions precipitated the emigration of Leviev and others musicians to the West. Those musicians that remained settled into a form of communist *blasé* that was a key dynamic in the performance of jazz in Bulgaria for much of the following two decades.

In Part II I shift to the end of communism in 1989, drawing upon my ethnographic research to explore issues in the transition to a capitalist economy, changes in social codes and ideologies from the communist period, and how these changes shaped ideas about jazz in Bulgaria. With these changes followed an array of new possibilities (and new frustrations) for musicians playing jazz in Sofia and other major cities. The ways in which jazz musicians have dealt with issues of labor migration, education, and the construction of selfhood, the relationship between subjectivity and commodity fetishism under capitalism, and the changing notions of meaning regarding objects of previously "bourgeois" coding becomes important to understanding the experience and development of jazz in Bulgaria throughout the last twenty years.

In Chapter 4 I explore the state of jazz musicians in Sofia after the collapse of the communist regime in 1989, and how the liquidation of the communist system created an environment in which musicians have had to develop multi-faceted strategies of subject construction in order to maintain their careers in an unstable market economy. I frame these strategies through discourse of "boredom," which since the 19th century has been seen as both a symptom of modern travails and as a space of distanciation through which

the subject can recover oneself, drawing upon Georg Simmel's *metropolitan man* and Walter Benjamin's *flâneur* as historical examples. Boredom is pertinent and useful, I argue, because the collapse of the highly-regimented socio-cultural apparatus of the communist regime ushered in an era of rapid democratic and capitalist reform that turned the experience of the everyday into a negotiation of fragmented images and spaces. For musicians, market reform and withdrawal of government support for music created a dearth of locales for the performance of creative, non-commercial music, particularly any form associated with jazz. One of these is the re-conceptualization of jazz "standards," often cast as the quintessential form of abstracted musical labor (i.e. gig tunes) in creative improvisation circles, as the keys to creating spaces in Sofia acceptable to improvised music and thus enacting a form of subjective recovery that co-opts the very boredom that alienates them.

In Chapter 5 I further contextualize how affects of the everyday like boredom are linked to practices by Bulgarian musicians by drawing upon the "historical montage" of fractured narratives to reflect the complex arrays of boredom as affect that permeate the city. This style of montage combines various epistemological and ontological narrative devices in order to understand the strategies of musicians playing jazz for a living within the post-communist urban milieu, whilst carving out spaces through which individual expression could be fostered. Broadly organized as self-conceptualization, festivals, and education, these vignettes underscore the historical links created within the Bulgarian conceptualization of modernity in the everyday, but also constitutes a "bodily presence to

the intensities of the present," particularly the intensities of the city and the affect that the city and its social relations may have.

In Chapter 6 I theorize the creation of intersubjective moments of musical performance through the lens of fascination, and how through these moments one can elucidate meanings unique to jazz performance in Bulgaria. Varying notions of jazz, I argue, serve as a mediating subtext for these musical encounters and create a series of binding affects that both accentuate and undercut notions of difference amongst musicians. What I call the *crafting* (i.e. one musician imagining how another does things) ties into the concept of fascination by bridging the gaps in experience and create the intersubjective moments that I allude to earlier. For theoretical framing I critique the notion of fascination as the "outside" posited by Maurice Blanchot, and then use Walter Benjamin's notion of "craft" as an intimate, material knowledge of the object as a way to counter Blanchot's take on fascination. I show how this intersection of fascination and crafting can be elucidated through the collaborative aesthetic relationships between musicians. As an example, I use one moment of contemporary engagement between musicians (Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov and Antoni Donchev). This particular intersubjective engagement illustrates how the multifaceted complex of desires in these engagements resists reduction to a "transcendental improvising subject." Instead, what is emphasized are the aspects of subject construction that are unique to the history and practice of jazz in Bulgaria. By engaging in this last critique of jazz historiography at the level of the performance itself, I bring the words of Parmakov and Gadzhev that open the dissertation

full circle and help to secure a definitive space for “Jazz in Bulgaria” and “Bulgarians in Jazz.”

PART I

Chapter 1: Bourgeois Becoming: European Fascinations, Oriental Anxieties, and the Beginnings of Jazz in Bulgaria (1878-1941)

In November of 1911, an orchestra led by British violinist Wallace Hartley played a series of engagements at one of the luxurious Black Sea casinos in Varna. Hartley, who was hired by the Southhampton-based Cunard Line in 1909 as an orchestra leader, had quickly gained the reputation as one of the finest at his job in the cruise ship industry from his work on the *Lusitania* and the *Mauretania*. His band was, in fact, so successful in Varna that they were invited to play at another casino in Sofia in early-1912 – welcome offseason employment for the recently engaged Hartley. While in Sofia, he received an offer for a potentially lucrative opportunity with the rival White Star Line to lead the orchestra on their new flagship's maiden voyage scheduled for the coming spring. Although his forthcoming marriage to Elizabeth Robinson gave him pause, the significant increase in pay and prestige of running the orchestra on the White Star's flagship proved too tempting, and he accepted the offer. This is how Wallace Hartley ended up on the *RMS Titanic*, and captured the hearts and minds of the British press and public by leading his orchestra in the hymn "Nearer My God to Thee" as the *Titanic* slowly sank into the icy waters of the North Atlantic (Barczewski 2004, 127).

Hartley's lasting legacy, re-imagined many times in both book and on film in time vastly overshadowed another significant legacy, one dating back to his time in Varna the

previous year.[1] While these concerts likely seemed as ordinary as any others to Hartley and his orchestra – playing a standard repertoire of operettas, waltzes, music hall songs, and hymns – they were perhaps a first for the burgeoning Bulgarian cosmopolitan elite in the early 20th century. Vladimir Gadzhev argues that Hartley was the first musician to play the American popular style of "ragtime" in Bulgaria. Ragtime had been introduced to most of Western Europe through traveling minstrel and vaudeville shows starting in the early-1890s, and by 1911 was a staple genre of concert halls, restaurants, casinos, and other spaces of bourgeois leisure. The style's adoption by Bulgarian musicians and audiences was a far more arduous and lengthy process. Not until the early-1930s did American popular styles become firmly established as an integral part of Bulgarian urban society, almost twenty years after Hartley first played his ragtime arrangements at the seaside resorts in Varna.

Part of the reason why jazz lacked a presence in Bulgarian life had to do with the lack of access to the minstrel and vaudeville circuits developing in Western Europe, Asia, Australia, and parts of Africa at that time.[2] Another, more important reason, had to do with the relatively gradual development and transformation of spaces of bourgeois leisure in Sofia and other cities during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. This development encompassed fifty years of political, social, economic, and epistemological changes, all of which influenced ideas about the modern urban subject in Bulgaria. By the beginning of World War II, the landscape through which urban Bulgarians saw themselves as

[1] Of note are Walter Lord's 1955 non-fiction account titled *A Night To Remember*, which was adapted into a film by Roy Ward Baker in 1958. The most recent, and perhaps most famous account of Hartley's orchestra is captured in James Cameron's *Titanic* (1997).

[2] See McKay 2005, Jackson 2003, Johnson 2000, Ballantine 2003, Atkins 2001, and Jones 2001.

"bourgeois" had changed significantly, both in terms of their relationship with the rural majority and through the cultural products and objects that produced by the elite classes.

In due consideration, this chapter explores the construction of bourgeois lifestyles in Bulgaria in the late-19th and early-20th centuries in order to better understand the social milieus through which jazz developed in Bulgaria during that time. What is so distinct about jazz's emergence in Bulgaria, as opposed to other parts of Europe, is that its adoption wasn't predicated upon an elite imagination about the United States or African Americans (France and Great Britain stand in contrast, for example). Rather, jazz and the leisure culture that perpetuated in Sofia and other cities were integrally tied into fractured and changing orders of knowledge, power, and being, as Bulgarians looked to find their place amongst Europe and Europeans during the fifty or so years post Liberation. More specifically, the long historical relationship between ideas of becoming-bourgeois, becoming-European, and becoming-Oriental – the lynchpin of early bourgeois consciousness expressed in ideas about education, politics, national consciousness, urban development, and literature – reached a critical mass in the years after the First World War. In the context of 1930s Bulgaria, jazz was more than simply a mimetic gesture toward the European city and its modern urban delights. It was part of a more general subjective detachment from the desires and anxieties inherent in the occidental/oriental divide that dominated ideas of Bulgarian-ness in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. In exploring different historical appearances of "bourgeois," "Europe," and "Orient," I show how notions of subject construction were constantly contested by members of Bulgaria's urban elite. Within this construction playing and listening to jazz, I argue, was

ultimately a manifestation of *blasé*, the point at which this fractured subjectivity itself became a form of detachment. *Blasé* is a term used specifically in an account about Sofia in the 1930s by Stephane Groueff, and encompasses the detachment in everyday life by urban cosmopolitan classes who define their identities through activities of leisure and the patronage of art and music. This detachment, I argue, was one of the key affects experienced by the urban bourgeoisie in Bulgaria during the 1930s, in as opposed to more romantic and nationalist forms of identity construction prevalent before WWI. The performance and patronage of "jazz" and jazz orchestras during this period is inexorably tied to the cultivation of *blasé* amongst urban bourgeois Bulgarians in stark contrast to the fetishizing of the Black aesthetic of "hot" music prevalent in parts of Western Europe in the wake of the First World War.[3]

EDUCATION AND WESTERN THOUGHT IN THE LATE-19TH CENTURY

During the Bulgarian National Revival of the late-18th century, education became one of the first sites in which a European bourgeois imagination began to appear. More and more Bulgarians were finding opportunities to study outside of the country for the first time, bringing back philosophical, political, and economic ideas that reshaped the social consciousness of Bulgarians and stoke the flames of nationalism and independence from the ruling Ottoman Empire.[4]

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[3] See Jackson 2003 for a detailed account of the writings of Hugues Panassié on jazz and the general tone of French patronage of African-American jazz musicians as the sole "authentic" purveyors of the jazz idiom.

[4] There is a large body of literature in both English and Bulgarian that cover both the Russo-Turkish War itself and preceding events (1876 Koprivshitsa Uprising, for example) that led to the Liberation, and the immediate political and cultural aftermath. See Crampton 1983, Georgiev 2007, and Palairet 2003.

The first educational influences in the Revival were from Greece, as the Orthodox Church held great sway in Bulgaria until around 1830. The economic exploitation of the peasantry by the Greek Patriarchate, coupled with a burgeoning exploration of Slavic ideals amongst the clerical and lay intelligentsia, led to a series of revolts against the Exarchate in places like Stara Zagora, Vratsa, and Kazanluk throughout the next decade The final break with the Greek Exarchate came in 1871 with the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian orthodox church (Roudometof 2001, 132-33; Guentchev 1977).

By the end of the Crimean War, this influence had shifted toward Russia, as part of that country's concerted effort to educate Slavic Christians living under Ottoman Rule by opening up opportunities to study in universities. Between 1840 and 1870, 41% of Bulgarians who obtained university degrees abroad had studied in Russia, mostly theologians and pedagogues (Stamatov 2001, 4-5). This Russian engagement in pan-Slavic affairs became instrumental in coming years, as Bulgarian intellectuals in the 1860s looked to Russia as a potential savior from the Ottomans. This culminated in the Russian military's role the Bulgarian Liberation via the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.

While the majority of Bulgarians received their education in Russia during the late Ottoman period, many also studied in Western European countries as well. 31% of Bulgarians seeking higher education studied either in France or in French-sponsored schools in the Balkans during the 1840-70 period, including many influential members of the Revival (ibid. 5). Most Bulgarians who studied in France during this time did so to study medicine, and returned with writings by Rousseau and Voltaire which were highly influential on the burgeoning nationalism embedded within the Revival. Petŭr Beron

(1799 – 1831), for example, spent much of his life in France, which in turn influenced many of his scientific works.[5] The burgeoning liberalism of late-18th century France also influenced Vasil Levski (1837-73), who was an instrumental revolutionary in Bulgaria's movement toward independence during the 1860s.

By the late-1870s, there were over 1,500 primary, secondary, religious, and trade schools in Bulgaria (Stamatov 2001, 4). This included the Bulgarian Literary Society, formed in Braila in 1869 that later became the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Also included were two charter schools formed by American Protestant missionaries, the first two American schools to exist outside the US. American College in Sofia was first, formed in 1860, followed by Robert College in Istanbul two years later. The American College was one of the only direct cultural links to the United States in the mid-to-late 19th century, and the school continued to be one of the elite institutions for educating teenagers until its closure by the communists in 1944. While the schools were two of the few direct links to 19th and early 20th century American culture for Bulgarians, their Protestant Christian orientation meant that the American citizens and ideas about America that students were exposed to were very limited.

By the 1880s, Germany became the most important destination for education in the fields of philosophy and the social sciences, and remained so well into the 20th century. The majority of Bulgarians educated in Germany meant that, for the first time,

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[5] Beron's well-known works include the so-called "Fish Primer" (*Riben bukvar*), one of the first Bulgarian language primers to be widely published, and his *magnum opus* called *Panepisteme*, which drew heavily on the scientific writings of Aristotle and is widely considered to be one of the first independent works of modern Western philosophy authored by a Bulgarian.

the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche gained popularity and became the cornerstone of intellectual and philosophical life in Bulgaria. In most Bulgarian secondary schools and universities, curricula and pedagogical methods were translated from German or taught in German-speaking schools. Most importantly, many important members of the late-19th century intelligentsia, those who shaped urban bourgeois culture and sensibilities, were increasingly under German sway. One example is Ivan Shishmanov (1862 – 1928), a literary scholar and professor at Sofia University who was one of the architects of the Bulgarian educational system who was educated primarily at the University of Leipzig (Yidelva and Yotov 2001, 120). Another was Pencho Slaveikov (1866 – 1912), also educated in Leipzig in philosophy. Slaveikov was one of the most influential poets of the era and helped to popularize Nietzsche's writings in Bulgaria, some of which he translated into Bulgarian himself. He was one of the first intellectuals to show open disdain for religious practices and evoke notions of a modern individualism based on Nietzschian concepts (Hitchens 1998).

The preoccupation with German writings and philosophy during this period culminated in the creation of the journal "Thought" (*Misŭl*) in 1892, which served as one of the foremost forums of Bulgarian intellectual life until 1907. The journal was founded by Krŭstyo Krŭstev (1865 – 1919), Bulgaria's first modern literary critic and one of the most influential Bulgarian thinkers of his time. He was head of a circle of intellectuals and writers called the *Misŭl* circle that included Slaveikov, Peyo Yovorov, and Petko Todorov, and whose goal was to introduce modernist ideas into Bulgarian literature in order to carve out a place in the European literary milieu. Krustev himself was also

influential as a translator, creating the first Bulgarian language editions of works by Ibsen, Descartes, and others. The foremost goal of all these intellectuals was to spark a movement in which Bulgarian literature emulated German style and ethics and evolve into a sophisticated "European" literature.

The major intellectual rival to the *Misŭl* circle during this time was Dimitŭr Blagoev (1856 – 1924), who studied in Russia and was instrumental in introducing Marxist aesthetics and ideas through a competing journal called "The New Path" (*Nov Pŭt*). Marx's writings had been discussed in Bulgarian circles since the 1850s, and many of the ideas of mass liberation from the Ottoman Empire through revolution had roots in various interpretations of Marx prevalent in Bulgaria at that time. Emilia Mineva argues that despite the relative lack of capitalist development in late-19th century Bulgaria in comparison to other European countries, Marxism took hold amongst certain circles because it resonated with the utopian revolutionary writings of poets like Hristo Botev that were popular around the time of the revolution (Mineva 2001, 62). Marxist intellectuals centered their activities in Gabrovo in the late-1880s, with their influence radiating out into the surrounding region. These early Marxists lacked a clearly delineated ideology, a factor that became important once formed into the Bulgarian Socialist Democrats in the early-1890s. For one, their influences came from a smattering of German, French, and Russian socialist thought – not all stemming directly from Marx (Dimou 2009, 177). There was also a considerable debate between Blagoev and others as to the applicability of Marxist critiques of the industrial base on an overwhelmingly agrarian population. Regardless of their conflicting backgrounds and ideologies, the

Social Democrats came together in support of industrialization, modernization, and capitalism as a necessary process for socialism to take hold in Bulgaria (ibid. 197). In this way, Bulgarian Marxists ironically shared a common belief with their rivals from the *Misŭl* circle that Bulgaria's future laid toward the adoption of Europe as a model for modernness.

By the beginning of the First World War, the developing Bulgarian intelligentsia had cemented their status in the cities and created a thriving literary culture. At the eve of the First Balkan War there were ninety-nine literary magazines in Bulgaria, sixty-six of which were published in Sofia. Surveys taken in 1915 showed that 89.9% of enlisted and conscripted soldiers were literate, which ranked 11th amongst countries at that time (Kebeltcheva 1999, 223). These various educational influences figured heavily into the Bulgarian elite's conceptualization of Europe through the First World War, and thus influenced the construction of bourgeois practice and ethics during this time.[6] While some aspects of "Europe" maintained an almost metaphysical presence in the Bulgarian imagination, other more tangible aspects were highly scrutinized based on social and political ideals. Germany and France, two of the most active influences on post-Liberation intellectual life, figured very highly in the construction of Europe for late-19th century Bulgarians. Great Britain, by contrast, did not. This was partially due to the fact that few Bulgarians were educated within the borders of the Empire. But it is also important to note the political stance that Britain took toward Bulgarian independence

[6] The creation of an educated elite also played a major role in the discourse of pan-Bulgarian national interests toward Macedonia and Dobrŭdzha – the prizes sought in the First and Second Balkan Wars and the disastrous alliance with the Central Power during World War I.

during the 1870s, supporting the Ottoman Empire's attempts to maintain control over Bulgaria as a check on Russian interests in the Balkans.[7]

Regardless of the fluid notions of Europe amongst the Bulgarian intelligentsia during this time, any movement toward becoming "European" required an urban cosmopolitan center, a hub for government and law, and a space of cultural trendsetting on par with the great European metropolises of Paris, Berlin, and London. From the mid-1880s, the newly declared capital of Sofia served that purpose. The new capital's growth in many ways mirrored the growth of its bourgeois occupants as Bulgarians and as Europeans.

BUILDING SOFIA: THE MODERN CAPITAL

For many Western-educated Bulgarians at the head of the Cultural Revival during the 1850s and 1860s, the essence of the "true" Bulgarian lay in countryside, within the spirit of the peasant. The city, on the other hand, was a hybridized space of Ottoman and Western decadence, where the gleaming façade of cosmopolitan life crumbled to reveal the social and economic inequities amongst occupants upon close inspection. This perspective on is articulated in writer and journalist Lyuben Karavelov's description of Plovdiv in 1868. He states that:

> The city is very picturesque, but you ought to see it just as you should see all other Asiatic cities (even Constantinople) – from a distance. When you look at Turkish cities from afar, they seem magnificent and picturesque, but as soon as

[7] Russia, though a prominent educational influence as well, did not figure as part of Europe in the same way, and was in fact criticized for their own European aspirations by some "Slavophile" Bulgarian authors such as Ivan Vazov (Kostova 1997, 108-9).

> you enter them you are confronted with half-demolished houses, muddy streets, stinking morasses, hopeless filth, lazy and mangy dogs and sleepy human physiognomies (Karavelov 2009, 237-38).

Karavelov's account of the "Ottoman" city as an urban Siren that lures the unwary into a "mirage" was balanced by other writings that emphasize the sense nostalgia for the cosmopolitanism of these urban spaces in the face of 19th century modernization. (Eldhman, Goffman, and Masters 1999; Hård and Misa 2008; Mills 2010). The construction of Sofia as the "modern" capital over during the late-19th century was very much a reflection of these tensions. Considering the supposedly "precarious" state of a city like Plovdiv during this time, the building of Sofia into the capital and cultural center of post-Liberation Bulgaria was a long and decidedly slow process.

At the time of the Liberation in 1878, Sofia was little more than a backwater provincial capital of the Ottoman Empire. The city lacked the historical importance and prestige of Plovdiv or Veliko Tŭrnovo, as well as the economic infrastructure and trade of the Danube River and Black Sea ports like Ruse or Varna. Not until the unification of the Principality of Bulgaria with Eastern Rumelia in 1885 did Sofia begin to grow in both size and importance. The next year, the government doubled the terrain available for home construction, but the zoning laws that enacted were vague, lacked a clear plan for city growth, and were often ignored by the influx of citizens from the villages looking for work. The result was a disorganized complex of neighborhoods, mostly poor, with poorly designed streets that isolated them from other settlements. Mass transit and automobiles were practically non-existent until the 1920s. Viennese-born Ferdinand Saxe-Coburg, the first prince regnant of post-Ottoman Bulgaria who later became Tsar in

1908, bought the first automobile in Bulgaria as his personal transport in the late-1890s. Horse, donkey, and foot were the most common modes on the unpaved streets, which became morasses of mud with the yearly rain and snow. There was no commercial district or Parisian-style arcades, as many merchants simply set up shops on the ground floor or basements of their homes, a practice carried over from the Ottoman period. Before the late-1880s there were also few of the cultural institutions that marked major European capitals, like theater and opera, museums, libraries, and universities. Mari Firkatian captures the growing pains of 19th century Sofia in the following passage, when she writes that:

> This Balkan capital east of Vienna would have been unfamiliar and exotic to anyone from Western Europe. Sofia was just emerging as a modern city when Paris and Vienna were already in decline. In fact, denizens of Bulgarian Danube port cities like Shvishtov and Ruse found Sofia backward. One contemporary informant thought the city both ill conceived and poorly organized – a jumble of neighborhoods with no clear city plan or charm (ibid. 29).

Although the provincial stigma remained with Sofia for some years afterward, Prince Ferdinand worked to rectify some of the more glaring omissions in the city's cultural life after ascending to the throne in 1887. He commissioned a series of parks, most notably an expansion of "Borisova Gardens" (*Borisova Gradina*) in central Sofia, botanical, zoological and ornithological gardens, and fountains. His early reign also saw the creation of various cultural institutions standard for any late-19th century European city. Sofia University was established in 1888, the Bulgarian Museum of Natural History the next year, and the National Archeological Museum in 1893. Although the main purpose of all the construction was the creation of a suitable court life for Prince

Ferdinand, the royal family, and visiting dignitaries, the museums and university also served as the lynchpin for a bourgeois lifestyle that began to separate itself from other Bulgarian cities such as Ruse, Varna, Stara Zagora, and Plovdiv.

The most important moment in Sofia's late-19th century development, however, was the construction of the Orient Express line through Sofia in 1888. Bulgaria as a whole had lacked access via rail to the rest of Western Europe, and the Express was one of the first major international lines to cross the country.[8] The original 1882 line went through Ruse and Varna on the way to Istanbul, but was diverted at the behest of Clementine of Orleans, the wife of Prince Ferdinand. She spent part of her personal fortune to redirect the line through Sofia in 1888 to heighten the city's profile after its first train station was finished that same year.

The creation of such a well-travelled rail line through Sofia brought a host of Western Europeans who sought to experience the perceived exoticism of the former and current Ottoman territories.[9] The moral projections of these writers – the "enlightened" European gazing upon the "backward" Bulgaria, Albanian, and Turk – took the veneer of the everyday experience as a basis, even though this kind of writing was an articulation of greater hegemonic and colonial structures that informed Western European thought at the time. John Hammond argues that in the case of Victorian travelogues, this took the form of an everyday articulation of colonial power where the moral hubris of the state played out in the daily interactions of Britons and those from the Balkans. "Beneath the

[8] The original Ruse-Varna Express line was built by a British company in the 1860s, a project that took several years to finish considering the route was built through some of the swampiest terrain in Southern Dobrŭdzha.

[9] The most notable example is Maria Todorova's seminal *Imagining the Balkans* (1997).

variegated political stances [of individual travelers]" he claims, "lies an articulation of fundamental cultural assumptions that shape, organize, channel and profoundly synthesize the majority of texts from the period. Of these assumptions, the denigration of the Balkans as a set of inferior cultures has a significance, and unifying function, that should not be underestimated" (Hammond 2004, 603). Hammond's point is well taken, and certainly a large part of this denigration had to do with a perception of moral authority amongst visiting Europeans. But European-educated Bulgarians of the late-19th century carried the same kind of moral authority over the peasantry and lower classes – also articulated mostly in personal journals, literature, and poetry. The burgeoning Bulgarian bourgeoisie enacted his authority to build the new Bulgarian nation in the image of Europe, a project that assumed supreme importance through the end of the First World War.[10]

Understanding the enactment of this bourgeois-centric hubris in the newly formed *petit* and *haute bourgeoisie* after 1878 requires an explanation of how these post-Ottoman capitalist classes became essential to the economic and social development of the country during the late-19th century. This diverse group of merchants, intellectuals, government employees, and politicians stepped into positions formerly held by Ottoman authorities and were instrumental in the transition of social and political power from the village to the city. Members of these classes also set the stage for rapid development of Sofia and other cities as centers of pre-WWI Bulgarian cultural production. Most importantly, the

[10] Russia, in the role of Bulgaria's "liberator" from Ottoman rule, played a part in the development of this consciousness as well. The exact nature and impact of Russia, however, was heavily debated, to the point that political and social discourse fractured in the "Slavophile" and "Slavophobe" discourses that combated constantly with one another over the next twenty years (Kostova 1997, 108).

petit and *haute bourgeoisie*, many of whom were European educated, irrevocably shifted the class imagination toward Europe as the ideal for their modern national identities.

The rapid rise of the *petit* and *haute* bourgeois was predicated on the power vacuum that occurred in the transfer of authority from the Ottoman regional governments. The lack of a traditional European landholding aristocracy prior to 1878 due to Ottoman governance placed those aristocratic social roles into the hands of a group known as the *chorbadzhiia*, a word that came from the rank of a regiment commander in the Ottoman Janissary corps. *Chorbadzhiia* were Bulgarian Christians who parlayed economic success as merchants into positions of authority as tax collectors and village representatives to provincial Ottoman Muslim authorities (Jelavich and Jelavich 1977, 5). Many of this merchant class openly opposed full independence because Ottoman stability and the erosion of the Empire's influence in Western Europe had opened vast commercial opportunities within Bulgaria (Chary 2011, 31). The complicity with the Ottoman authorities during the first active stages of the Liberation meant that the *chorbadzhiia* were ill-suited to step into the moral and political authority of the newly semi-autonomous Bulgarian state. In this wake, the intelligentsia gained *carte blanche* to step into positions of political authority and dictate policy to the still overwhelmingly agrarian and rural population of Bulgaria. Added to their ranks were the throngs of *nouveau* intelligentsia, who migrated from the villages to the towns stratified themselves from the peasants along class lines. The result was a political and social chasm between the new

bourgeois and the majority agrarian base in their respective ideologies, goals, and lifestyles.[11]

Much of the development of modern Bulgaria after 1878 was specifically related to the perceived dichotomy between the smaller educated intelligentsia and the more numerous undereducated agrarian populous. But just as important was the developing dichotomy within the intelligentsia itself, as some were uncomfortable in claiming themselves as purveyors of "high culture" in the European sense. As Rumen Daskalov showed, the development of a bourgeois elitism amongst the intelligentsia was not immediate, even as the educated elite fulfilled an aristocratic role as the heirs to the long-dormant national culture. The cultural and political elitism that developed was balanced by a populism that reflected an insecure economic future, and the difficulty in developing and maintaining high moral and intellectual standards amongst the *nouveau* intelligentsia (Daskalov 2001, 539-40). In light of these concerns, the urban/rural class dichotomies in the early years of the Bulgarian state were exceptionally fluid, and overt displays of elite culture and values were many times nuanced with a self-deprecating mentality, a sense of being "Europeans…but not quite" (ibid. 536).

Daskalov's articulation of "Europeans…but not quite" neatly encompasses the Bulgarian *petit* and *haute bourgeois* gaze toward Europe during the late-19th century.

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[11] R.J. Crampton, for example, argues that the urban intelligentsia made two distinct and critical errors in building their relationship to the peasantry during this time. The first was a failure to realize that with the vast majority of the population still in the countryside working the land, and the wealth needed to create and maintain a European city would have to be produced from the agricultural base. The second the denigration of peasant values as part of an effort to distance themselves from the "backward" reputation Bulgaria had amongst their bourgeois peers from other parts of Europe (Crampton 2007, 108).

The desire to be thought of as European manifested as a doubly-inscripted complex of moral indignations and "modernist" desires, in which Europe, the European imagination of the Orient, and Bulgarian self-identification were at play in subject construction. Neither "Europe" nor "Orient" were, of course, stable, distinct ideals for the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. For this reason, elements of both "Europe" and "Orient" could be adopted and performed simultaneously with minimal cognitive dissonance. For the post-Liberation bourgeoisie, this kind of doubly-inscripted subjectivity became an integral part of cultural institutions, most notably those institutions that attempted to bring the country into the modern age and closer to Western Europe. To more specifically ground the complex between "Europe" and "Orient" within the late-19th century Bulgarian bourgeois self, I briefly explore two literary examples from this period that deal with these issues. The writings of Aleko Konstantinov and Nadejda Stancioff articulate many of the complexities and anxieties of defining the "modern" Bulgarian of this era. In their explorations of those issues, both authors allude to a bourgeois class consciousness toward everyday urban life that formed part of the social milieu in Sofia during the early-20th century. In this "modern" Sofia, the practices of "jazz" and Western popular music developed as part of a fluid bourgeois cosmopolitanism after the First World War.

To Chicago and Back: The "Modernist" Bulgarian Travelogue

The most prominent literary accentuation of this bourgeois double-inscription is through the writings of Aleko Konstantinov (1860 – 97), a humorist, traveler, and perhaps the most important voice detailing Bulgaria's social movement toward modern

Europe in the late-19th century. His two most famous works – the 1894 travelogue *To Chicago and Back* (*Do Chikago i nazad*) and *Bai Ganyo*[12] (which first appeared in thirteen parts in the journal *Misŭl* and later compiled into a book in 1897) – are cornerstones of late-19th century Bulgarian literature and the source of long-debated symbols and allegories of what constitutes a thoroughly modern Bulgarian. Aleko and his creation represent two sides of late-19th century Bulgarian life – the well-dressed, articulate, inquisitive cosmopolitan, and the unhygienic, rude, troublemaking rose oil trader.[13]

The strength of Aleko's writing lies in his articulation of how ideas of "Europe" and "Orient" were confronted differently by the protagonist of each book. *To Chicago and back* is a travelogue typical of European writers during the late-19th century, and one of the first written by a Bulgarian to gain widespread readership in the country. The book centers mainly on Konstantinov's journey to the 1893 Chicago Exhibition, having become an enthusiast of such exhibitions through trips to Paris and Plovdiv in prior years. Aleko and his two companions engage in impromptu encounters with Americans, Europeans living in the United States or attending the Fair, and fellow Bulgarians peddling their wares at the country's pavilion at the exposition. Two of Aleko's reactions seem apropos to the articulation of the doubly-inscripted Bulgarian bourgeois

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[12] The term *bai* is an honorary designation for an older, unrelated male. Timothy Rice surmised that it might be related to the Turkish honorific *bey*, meaning gentleman or chieftain (Rice 1994, 328). I used the term in the text instead of an English translation because *bai* remains in the English translation of the novel.

[13] Rose oil, distilled from the crop of fertile rose fields surrounding the town of Kazanluk in central Bulgaria, has been one of the country's foremost commodities since the early-19th century and is a great source of national pride.

subjectivity, and have been explored in other writings about the book.[14] One is his interest in the fair itself, particularly the architecture and sheer size of the pavilions at Chicago fair, which dwarfed those present at the Paris and Plovdiv expositions. His reactions to the grandeur of the Exposition, as well as with the commodities on display, place him within a broader epistemology of European imperialism, the apparatuses of imperial objectification, and the subject's place within these orders of knowledge and power.

The other is his encounter with Ganyo Somov, a man who inhabited a shop on the Midway pavilion called "Bulgarian Curiosities" and embodied many of the worst qualities of the "Oriental" Bulgarian that Aleko denigrates throughout his work. The shop itself was a source of embarrassment, as Somov sold wares and trinkets more readily associated with Native Americans than Bulgarians (Neuburger 2006, 439). In the back, Somov sat cross-legged, dressed in Turkish clothing, smoking, and peddling little vials of rose oil. His clothing and demeanor were clearly intended to fulfill the commodity gaze of the Exposition visitors, but in Somov Aleko saw a vision of Bulgaria's struggle to establish modernness in European eyes. In the last pages of *To Chicago and Back,* during the long boat journey across the Atlantic, Aleko claimed to be formulating the basis for fictional character based partly on his encounter with Somov at the World's Fair. This was Bai Ganyo, one of the most famous characters of late-19th century Bulgarian literature and a national symbol of contested interpretation.

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[14] See the introduction to Robert Sturm's translation *To Chicago and Back* (2004) and Mary Neuburger, "The Chicago and Back: Aleko Konstantinov, Rose Oil, and the Smell of Modernity" (2006).

As with Somov, Aleko wrote *Bai Ganyo* as the embodiment of the "backward" Orientalized Bulgarian out of place in the new, modern European Bulgaria. Ganyo was a traveling salesman whose "orientalized" demeanor horrified both the Europeans and Europeanized Bulgarians that he came into contact with. Though the character had aspirations of peddling his rose oil all over the continent, he only got as far as Vienna, finding himself in one predicament after another. He was deeply superstitious (evident in the fact that he refused to let his stash of rose oil off of his person), rarely bathed, and caused commotions in public spaces like the opera. Worse perhaps was his attempt to fit into cosmopolitan society by wearing a European style suit and hat, only to be given away by his "oriental" demeanor and actions. By the end of the book Bai Ganyo returns to Bulgaria, nary more aware or "enlightened" than when he left.

The meaning of *Bai Ganyo* to all spectrums of Bulgarian society has been a source of considerable debate throughout the twentieth century. Many of Aleko's contemporaries saw the character as a cautionary tale for an emerging bourgeois consciousness. Krŭstev, for example, saw Bai Ganyo as embodying the low intellectual and moral capacity of an "average" Bulgarian at that time. Ivan Shishmanov, in the same vein, argued that Bulgarians were meant to look upon the character's failings and reflect upon, ultimately rejecting, their own backwardness (Daskalov 2001, 532-33). Later interpretations varied. Interwar accounts by literary critics Vladimir Vassilev and Atanas Iliev saw the character as representative of the semi-literate urban intelligentsia who moved to the cities from the villages in search of work. Scholars from Blagoev's Marxist tradition claimed that the character, as a merchant, was corrupted by and embodied the

evils of capitalism and was a product of the years after Liberation which social transformation and crude accumulation of capital was the rule (ibid. 540-41).

Though historical accounts of *Bai Ganyo*'s impact and meaning clearly vary, many writers and scholars agree that Aleko clearly positioned himself as Bai Ganyo's mirror image, the modern bourgeois Bulgarian casting his pen as a sword of critique against the excesses of modern life. "Aleko" argued Todor Zhevchev, "himself presents a counterbalance to the national disgrace represented by Bai Ganyo and rescues us Bulgarians from our feelings of shame" (ibid. 533). This counterbalance is seen most strongly in his assessments of the American cities visited on his travels and of London. Aleko saw these Western metropolises through an interesting double-vision – full of spectacle yet inherently flawed as models for Bulgaria's own burgeoning capital. Although Aleko appreciated the seemingly egalitarian nature of American dress on both Whites and African-Americans, the mechanical and repetitious nature of city life deeply concerned him. Americans, he decided, "roam and dart around like cogs of a machine, automatically walking to and fro and interweaving…they reinsert dollars into the machine and again go to and fro like cogs" (Konstantinov, c.f. Bracewell 2009, 201).[15] Aleko ultimately decided that the grandeur of both the World's Fair and the developing Chicago skyline masked the more sinister social relations wrought by capitalism's excesses. His critique of the city was framed as a warning to other bourgeois Sofians not to fall into the same traps and become "cogs of a machine" like Chicagoans.

[15] Aleko's reaction to the Chicago slaughterhouses was especially virulent, and this was one of the most famous passages from the book, and an example of the modern *blasé* developing amongst the Bulgarian bourgeois at that time. This particular passage will be explored further in Chapter 4.

Aleko's account of London was far more brutal, as the British capital lacked Chicago's egalitarian charm and proved to be an even worse model for the emergent Sofia as a modern metropolis. He mocked the supposed grandeur of London Bridge and expressed chagrin about the dreariness of the Thames, likening the harbored boats to piles of coal. He noted running into drunken workers wearing tattered clothing, and marveled at how utterly bland the food and drink were, all the while pining for the Parisian *cafés* of his memory. "Over the entire city," he wrote, "dozes a thin, transparent fog, in which gas and electric lights twinkle…the City is absolutely quiet and sleepy at night, its streets almost empty" (ibid. 203). In contrast to Chicago's frenetic pace and mechanistic rhythms, London was doused in fog, dreary, sleepy, and seemingly bored with itself.

Aleko's interpretation of Chicago and London as models of Western urban life for Bulgarians to avoid was a significant step in the development of a critical voice stemming from the bourgeois Bulgarian. His example was followed by others in the years prior to the First World War, further cementing the presence of a multifaceted and astute bourgeois consciousness amongst Bulgarian city dwellers.

Nadejda Stancioff and the "Oriental" Mirror

In contrast to Aleko's vision, the writings of the Stancioff family present a different articulation of the doubly-inscripted subject in post-Liberation Bulgaria, writings that elucidate differences between Aleko's *petit bourgeois* perspective and the Stacioff's *haute bourgeois* disposition. These writings articulate the epistemic gap

between *becoming*-European and *becoming*-Oriental that constituted the construction of *haute bourgeois* identity and subject construction in the late-19th century.

Many of the Stancioff's writings are found in Mari Firkatian's biography of the family, including journal entries and letters written between 1894 and 1957. The book provides several intriguing examples of how this subjective negotiation between Europe and Orient was employed in everyday practices amongst members of the *haute bourgeoisie*. The father, Dimitri, was a diplomat in the service of Prince (later Tsar) Ferdinand and held various posts in St. Petersburg (1896-1907) and Paris (1908-15). He was also instrumental in negotiating treaties ending the Second Balkan and First World Wars for Bulgaria. His wife Maria was born to a family of French aristocrats, was highly educated, and served as a lady-in-waiting to Princess Clementine starting in the late-1880s. The family, Firkatian argues, was an example of the development of a higher-end bourgeoisie that not only lived and became educated in Western Europe, but was an integral part of the highest institutions of European power and prestige. Though the Stancioff's were not aristocrats themselves, much of the late-19th century European aristocratic mindset became part of their everyday milieu, and influenced their interactions with Bulgarians of various class strata. How this worked in conjunction with their construction of Bulgaria and their inner "Orient" gives us another angle on how this complex played out in the bourgeois consciousness.

The family's dalliance with an inner "Orient", I argue, was an attempt to grasp a sense of the modern through an objectification of the "oriental" affects of Bulgaria's recent past. Much as Konstantinov intended for modern Bulgarians to look upon Bai

Ganyo and feel shame for their own interiorized backwardness, the Stancioff's romanticized Orient serves the same kind of function. Firkatian explores this idea of an inner "Orient" in the *haute bourgeois* consciousness mostly through the oldest daughter Nadejda, who kept the most precise records of her daily activities of anyone in the family.[16] As a young Bulgarian girl living most of her young life amongst the high society of 19th century Europe, her subjective milieu was shaped by a diverse array of historically-contextualized idealisms that set her within a myriad of self-as-enlightened (European) and self-as-backward (Balkan) constructions. Of several moments mentioned in the book that highlight certain parts of this dichotomy, the most telling is of a photo session in Paris in 1913 in which Nadejda "dresses the part" of an orientalized Bulgarian as a complex enactment of morality and desire. Firkatian notes that:

> wearing a theatrical Balkan costume she might have imagined Europeans believed typical of the region. Facing the camera's eye, her direct but unapproachable gaze sears into the depths of the lens; with the fierce look of a rebel, her arms, in contrast rest. One arm is at her side, and the other in her lap. Her garments are loose-fitting linens and rough hand-woven fabrics. She has a long striped head covering draped on either side of her shoulders, and there is a curved dagger on her lap; a rough, ornate cross hangs from her neck, and there is a heavy cabochon ring on her left hand. Her right hand is poised over a beaten brass coffee pot, which rests on the small table beside her.
>
> It is a bizarre ensemble for a Bulgarian-French woman who posed in a studio sometime in 1913. This photograph, in comparison and timing, is witness to her affinity for the Orient. It is no accident that she created and recorded that image of herself. She felt truly a part of the Orient – the mysterious, dangerous, and enigmatic part of the world that seeped into the eastern parts of Europe and simmered at the periphery of civilization. As the Balkan wars progressed, her self-identification with that part of the world matured. She wrote: 'Let us be fatalistic and enigmatic like true Orientals!' (Firkatian 2008,120)

[16] Nadejda later followed in her father's footsteps into the diplomatic corps, becoming an advisor to Aleksander Stamboliiski, prime minister from 1919-23, and was on the verge of becoming the first female ambassador to the United States when the agrarian government was violently overthrown (Firkatian 2008, 1-2).

This photograph, as well as Nadejda's romanticized conception of being part of a harem, which she professed in her journal,[17] could simply be considered the yearnings of an adolescent girl, as she was 18 at the time of the picture. In an earlier entry she declares "me, with my Oriental temperament like only things, which are a bit ardent… I adore adjectives like: raucous, spirited, fiery, shimmering, luminous, bizarre, enigmatic, violent, prophetic, the ensemble lingers in my room like a scarf of fire!" (Stancioff 1912, c.f. ibid.106)

Another side of the Europeanized self-imagination of the *haute bourgeoisie* in Bulgaria was a class-based rejection of those who did not fit into this Orient-as-object so thoroughly constructed based on her varied and cosmopolitan upbringing. Another passage from Nadejda's journal, this one from 1920 when she was in her early twenties, captures her relative disdain for Bulgarians who lacked her cosmopolitan outlook and graces and who she felt were beneath her. At this time, she was living in Sofia working with her father, away from the confines of their villa on the Black Sea and her life of international intrigue as a diplomat's daughter. Reflecting on this postwar period in Bulgaria, Nadejda writes,

> If one could choose not to be a Bulgarian and not have any relationships or ties to unpleasing compatriots except for the country and its beauties. There are no exceptions! At the moment and it is horrible to say, but outside of my father, two relatives, and two friends I do not like anyone else in Sofia!....Poor dear exquisite and nice Bulgaria with common, lying, odious inhabitants! (ibid. 211)

[17] The full passage, as quoted by Firkatian: "I would have loved to have lived in a harem; to be among the odalisques the most beautiful and the most beloved; to sleep on the rich rugs…to have long perfumed hair, to inhale the warm scents of rare essences, to be dressed in long veils…the blazing hot glazes of the Orient. Le dolce far niente d'Orient" (ibid. 120).

Like Aleko himself or the Bulgarian students in Vienna that dot the pages of *Bai Ganyo*, Nadejda's disgust reveals a few different registers. The most important of these is the idea that the living, breathing Bulgarian peasant was shattering her romantic expectations of what people in her "Oriental" homeland should be like. In a way, Nadejda was looking for a Bulgaria devoid of "Bulgarians", who in her mind were tampering with the country's natural beauty that *haute bourgeoisie* like the Stancioff's felt it was their place to protect. Her attitudes were rife with the kind of Victorian morality no doubt ingrained her education and daily mingling within bureaucratic circles in St. Petersburg and Paris growing up. A similar type of morality was displayed in the late-19th century British travelogues about the Balkans. Nadejda also voices the idea that the *haute bourgeoisie* had become a new post-Liberation aristocracy, and that Bulgaria's future rested on their ability to pull the rest of the country into the modern world by any means necessary.

Nadejda's nascent attitudes of superiority became one of the defining traits of her political career during and after the First World War, especially toward Bulgarian Prime Minister Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski, with who she worked very closely until his assassination via coup d'etat in 1923.[18] Stamboliiski's goal upon taking office in 1919 was to reverse the imperialist desires and aristocratic arrogance of the abdicated Tsar Ferdinand by realizing the desires of his ruling party in the creation of an agrarian republic. He was uniquely suited for this role insofar that he was an intelligent individual who lacked the subtle expressiveness and demeanor of a "European" head of state.

[18] Stamboliiski's government was overthrown primarily by members of the Military League, a group of army officers and political bureaucrats led by Aleksandŭr Tsankov, who succeeded him as prime minister after the coup. Stamboliiski escaped from Sofia, but was caught in his home village of Slavovitsa where he was tortured and murdered. See Crampton 2007 and Bell 1977.

Nadejda, it seems, saw Stamboliiski as a project – someone she and other members of the nascent *haute bourgeoisie* could mold him into a worthy leader for Bulgaria, a diamond in the rough. She in fact once stated that he was "at one moment a child and the next a genius," while her father Dimitri observed that "he used to tell me that his relatives used to chase him from the house when he forgot to bring back his sheep and cattle – and all of a sudden he has an elegance of his thoughts which we thought so often as crude" (ibid. 205-06).

In many ways, Stamboliiski was constructed by Nadejda as a semantic bridge between the various social strata of postwar Bulgarian society. He was an embodiment of the kind of self-exoticism that Stancioff and other *haute bourgeoisie* practiced in everyday life as the "heirs" to Bulgaria's political and cultural future. The epistemic gap between *becoming*-European and *becoming*-Oriental played out in their construction of Stamboliiski, perhaps a kind of Lacanian mirror stage in Bulgarian bourgeois development. More importantly, Stamboliiski's humble, rural upbringing in concert with his inquisitive mind meant that as a leader he could bridge the gap between various occupants of Bulgaria's rapidly growing cities. By 1900, the small, urban elite of Sofia in particular were constantly in need of ways to deal with the rapid influx of migrants from the villages in the last decade of the 19th century. This brought the dichotomy between bourgeois and "urban village" into sharper focus, as each side competed for limited space and resources. Rectifying this dichotomy became an important part of social life in Sofia during the first half of the 20th century. Such resolutions were achieved by developing spaces and institutions of a modern cosmopolitan lifestyle. This,

in turn, set the stage for the development of spaces of bourgeois leisure in the 1920s and 1930s, the future havens for the urban bourgeois subject.

BOURGEOIS CONSCIOUSNESS IN 20TH CENTURY SOFIA

By the start of the First World War, an essential part of the bourgeois consciousness in Bulgaria was the transformation of Sofia into a modern European city through the creation of new buildings, cultural institutions, and public works worthy of Bulgaria's nationalist desires in unifying the "Bulgarian" peoples in Macedonia, Thrace, and Dobrŭdzha. This idea of unification peaked between 1912 and 1917, though remnants of this line of thought continue to this day in some circles. In any case, Sofia was slowly developing into the center of social and political power in Bulgaria, and the delineation of cosmopolitan class of Bulgarians comparable to European urbanites became ever more important as Bulgaria attempted to carve a presence in European political circles.

Blair Jaekel's description of a cacophonous market surrounding a mosque in Sofia during a stopover on the Orient Express in 1910 illustrates the attempt to shape urban culture by the Bulgarian bourgeoisie. He speaks in great detail about a "hawking, bantering multitude" of varying classes, ethnicities, and religions in "gala dress" peddling their wares. Like the rest of the peoples living in the Balkans, the peddlers and merchants were "simple-minded, unsophisticated country people; unsophisticated, except in occasional brigandage in the sparsely settled districts" (Jaekel 1910, 133). As remarkable as the whole of his description is toward a picture of the Western bourgeois imagination

toward Bulgaria, he ends the passage about the market hinting at the temporality of such a spectacle within the urban milieu.

> At last the peasants, after a profitable holiday in town, prepare to start on their homeward journey. By the middle of the afternoon the last solitary vender has departed with his pack-animals or his bullock cart, his fur coat and his woollen [sic] stockings. Then the street cleaners and street sprinklers take the square in hand. They sprinkle the dust and scrub the pavement and in half an hour you would not have believed that that same square was the place from which emanated, but a short time before, the Babeioruc hum-drum of hundreds of perspiring market-people (ibid. 141).

What is so intriguing about this passage is the notion of cleaning the streets as an "erasure" of agrarian presences in the city.[19] The peasants are tolerated in the space of the square for as long as needed to conduct their business for the day, and then all traces of their presence are wiped away by street cleaners. Jaekel's description sketches a very visceral image that outlines many of the complexes of the post-Liberation bourgeoisie in Bulgaria discussed thus far. Similar to Konstantinov's construction of Bai Ganyo or Stancioff's imagination of an orientalized Bulgaria at her fingertips, Jaekel paints a picture in which urbanites grapple with displays and images of their own backwardness. The city was constructed to be a space in which the dichotomy between urban and agrarian was to be most pronounced. In practice this pristine image of the urban was more difficult to maintain. Some Sofians, for example, were known to raise domestic

[19] Jaekel also talks of meeting in Sofia a hotel proprietor who spoke nine languages, including English, which he learned from reading newspapers. His ability was such that he could "read Dickens," converse and be understood with little difficulty, even though he had never (according to the author) met an English-speaking person before, a trait which marveled Jaekel (ibid. 7). The passage is yet another example of the European gaze of the travelogue discussed earlier with regard to Hammond's work, though in this case extended into the early-20th century and to an American author.

animals within city limits well into the 1950s, not exactly an exemplary practice in a supposedly Europeanized "metropolis" (Guentcheva 2004, 212).

Constructing the veneer of a European city led to a perpetuation of modern architecture, structures, and institutions of high culture and mass media. Much of this work started during the 1880s and 1890s as Sofia grew rapidly through the addition of the railroad, *Borisova Gradina*, Sofia University, et al.[20] Modernization continued in the 1920s, embracing forms of technology and modern lifestyles that created spaces through which jazz and popular music flourished in the urban milieu for the first time. The most important of these institutions for early jazz in Bulgaria was "Native Radio" (*Radio Rodno)*, later to become Bulgarian National Radio.

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[20] One of the first monuments to the burgeoning post-Liberation bourgeois lifestyle in Sofia was the massive Grand Hotel Bulgaria, which was located at # 1 Vasil Levski Boulevard, later the location of the Sofia Press Agency. The original structure was built in 1881, designed by Czech architect Anton Kolar, who was the modeler of many of the most famous landmarks conceived during the Battenberg regime, including the City Garden (1879) and the monument to Vasil Levski (1895). Dragan Tenev describes the original building in his memoir about interwar Sofia.

> Built as a "Viennese style" facade in the fashion of the time, Hotel Bulgaria was designed according to all rules and requirements of the then luxury hotels in Europe and fully covered the perceptions of hotel comfort in those days. Compared with its contemporary and primitive inns in Sofia as [the city] existed then, [Hotel Bulgaria] represented a real palace. And rightly our grandfathers walked by in awe. In these opportunities the absolute Grand Hotel Bulgaria, of course, was no competition. And logically, all the prominent people from abroad who arrived in our city on various occasions in those distant days, stayed in it (Tenev 1997, 103).

Grand Hotel Bulgaria became Sofia's version of the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City, and Tenev captures the spectacle of the structure ("rightly our grandfathers walked by in awe") both in construction and as a landmark of Sofian bourgeoisness. It is implied that anyone of fame or report in Sofia at that time lodged at the Grand Hotel. Tenev even gives a list of notables who stayed there between roughly 1918 and 1937: Russian revolutionary Maxim Litvinov Maksimovich Kamò, American journalist and author John Reed, Irish journalist James David Bourchier, Indian poet and philosopher Rabindrath Tagore, and Chilean classical pianist Claudio Arrau (in Tenev's book he mistakenly refers to Arrau as a Brazilian). The hotel was featured prominently in photos and lithographs before WWI as a landmark of Sofia's urban landscape. When the original building began to deteriorate in the late-1920s, coupled with competition from the nearby Hotel *Slavyanska Beseda* which opened in 1935, plans for a replacement building were made to go near Battenberg Square, near the Presidential Office and the Tsar Osvoboditel monument. The newer, larger Grand Hotel Bulgaria was opened in 1938 at its present location on Blvd. Tsar Osvoboditel across from the façade of the main building of Sofia University, where Hotel Bulgaria remains to this day.

Radio Rodno

Bulgarians first became interested in the possibility of a national radio in 1927, when the first radio association, under the leadership of Georgi Georgiev. The organization stems series of debates in the "National Assembly" (*narodno sŭbranie*) over the next three years to establish the Rules for the Implementation of the Radio, and open the door for a centralized civic regional radio station based in Sofia. At the time, there was no civic broadcasting authority in the country, and in 1930 a group of intellectuals and politicians come together and form a cooperative to gain broadcasting rights from the government and form a legal radio station. Their efforts culminate in the so-called "Native Radio" (*Radio Rodno*), which is legally formed on March 30th of that year. A transmitter was installed later that year on top of a building at # 3 Georgi Benkovski Street in Sofia, and the first broadcasts of Radio Sofia could be heard in the surrounding towns of Pernik, Dŭpnitsa, Kiustendil, and occasionally as far as Shumen.[21] By 1934 music accounted for 71.4% of *Radio Rodno*'s programming, of which 15.3% was dance and popular music (Stoyanova 1990, 79).

On January 1st, 1935 a royal decree issued by Tsar Boris III nationalized Radio Sofia, and newly formed Radio Stara Zagora and Radio Varna into Bulgarian National Radio (BNR). Panayot Todorov, a painter more popularly known as "Sirak Stirak", was the first Chief of Broadcasting and head of Radio Sofia. The new National Radio extended the format and content of programming by broadcasting in multiple languages

[21] Ironically, one of the first engineers for *Native Radio* was Mehmet Rafiq, who was the grandson of Abdul Hamid, the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire.

(Italian, German, French, English, and Spanish) and expanding upon Native Radio's practice of creating most of the musical programming through live studio ensembles. This was necessary because approximately 80-85% of BNR's programming throughout most of the 1930s was music related, and a shortfall of recordings meant that a steady stream of musicians had to be in the employ of BNR at all times (ibid. 79). The radio was thus one of the first state-sponsored employers of musicians in Bulgaria.

The expansion of the musical division was overseen by Dimitŭr Nenov, the first head of musical programming who was instrumental in streamlining many of the National Radio's musical practices. He was responsible for the creation of the BNR's record library that is still exists today, as well as bringing in Bulgarian composers to write works specifically for the radio ensembles and broadcast live as a way to account for a shortfall of available repertoire for broadcast. Nenov's own works, mostly for the Radio's Symphony Orchestra that was formed in 1937, were augmented by compositions by a diverse array of young talent, including Pancho Vladigerov, Parashkev Hadjiev, Marin Goleminov, and Yosko Yosifov. At their disposal were some of the finest young musicians in Bulgaria at the time, such as pianists Petŭr Stŭpel and Mara Petkova, violinists Mitko Sabev and Dobrin Petkov, and singers Ivanka Miteva and Rayna Getsovo (Gadzhev 2010, 88).

Nenov is also important in that he was one of the earliest proponents for the creation of ensembles for jazz and dance band music on the National Radio. In 1934, Nenov organized the first "jazz" orchestra exclusively for *Native Radio*, a ten-piece group that broadcast from a large building on the corner of Benkovski and Moskovksa

Streets in central Sofia (ibid. 89). In order to fill the need for more European-style salon pieces for radio broadcasts, which by 1935 consisted of 22% or the Radio's weekly programming, Nenov was tasked with constructing a larger and more diverse ensemble. The new salon and jazz orchestra, which premiered in 1936, consisted of members of the Royal Military Symphony Orchestra (*Tsarskiya Simfonen Orkestŭr*), Boris Leviev's salon band, and three members of Nenov's *Native Radio* jazz orchestra (saxophonists Ivan Karamishev and Niko Nissimov, and trumpeter Lyuben Stoimenov). The new group was led by famed conductor Vasil Stefanov, who took on the orchestra in addition to his duties as head of the Royal Military Symphony Orchestra. The group's repertoire included a wide range of pieces from different genres – overtures from operas and operettas, ballets, and other kinds of popular music (Dimitrova 2010). Though few traces of the ensemble's output remain, mostly descriptions of personnel and a few pieces, *Native Radio*'s salon orchestra was the first state-sponsored jazz ensemble in Bulgaria.

By 1938 BNR was broadcasting to every corner of Bulgaria, and the radio's foreign language service introduced the possibility of non-Bulgarian audiences tuning in to the Radio's programming. The bourgeois dream of a media footprint throughout Southeastern Europe was accomplished, and a great source of pride for many residents of Sofia between the Wars. Dragan Tenev describes his first look at the antenna commissioned for Radio Sofia in 1936 that linked together stations in Stara Zagora in Varna to provide nationwide broadcasting coverage for the first time. It also allowed for Radio Sofia to be heard outside of Bulgaria's borders in neighboring countries, spreading Bulgarian programming outside of its limited sphere of influence.

> Of course, I and several of my friends as we headed away from Eagle Bridge to Knyazhevo to see the "iron giant", as written in the newspapers and believe - not at all disappointed. The antenna really seemed to us like faces among ichthyosaurus empty then Pawlowski field. Accordingly, it emitted a radio signal, already with a capacity of three kilowatts!
>
> I know that some contemporaries would smile indulgently when they hear this, but in those conditions - you must admit - and this was an achievement for Bulgaria. From that moment on Bulgarian radio would have heard if not farther, at least to Yugoslavia, Greece, and western Romania, and that meant Bulgarian words and Bulgarian music go beyond the country's airwaves (Tenev 1997, 151).

Jazz and the Emergence of the Bulgarian Recording Industry

Although the first Glen Miller-style big band with full 16-piece instrumentation didn't appear in Bulgaria until 1947, the seeds for its development were sewn throughout the late-1920s and 1930s. After Wallace Hartley's "introduction" of ragtime to Bulgarians in 1911, a number of years passed before the first Bulgarian groups began to take root playing similar repertoire. The Balkan Wars of 1912-13, as well as the First World War were disruptive for Bulgarian urban life, as the country was on the losing end of the latter two conflicts. Some of the policies of Stamboliiski's Agrarian Union had a direct effect on the cities themselves. For example, mandatory work brigades were instituted in the countryside to perform menial public works tasks such as road repair and bridge construction, with a great many of the brigade members coming from urban areas and living in the countryside while serving one or two year terms (Bell 1977). Despite this movement from the cities, and Stamboliiski's own disdain for the city as an anathema from the true "peasant spirit" of Bulgaria, an urban lifestyle began to establish itself, especially in Sofia where the seeds of a cosmopolitan nightlife began to build in the rapidly growing capital.

The earliest bands to resemble the first postwar jazz groups were urban salon orchestras (*salonni orkestri*) that had been thriving in Bulgarian cities since the turn of the century. These groups grew out of 19th century tavern bands and military brass orchestras, becoming more associated with Europeanized cosmopolitan spaces like restaurants, taverns, cinemas, and casinos as the groups became more professionalized. Often these groups consisted of foreign musicians, mainly Serbian or Czech, though other groups consisted of Bulgarian or Rom ("Gypsy") *svirdzhii*.[22] Bands found most of their venues in Sofia, in Danube river cities like Ruse and Silistra, or at the Black Sea resorts of Varna and Burgas. Salon orchestras became especially popular in post-1918 when high-end Viennese restaurants were *en vogue*, and the bands subsequently added many styles popular in Western Europe at that time, including waltzes, foxtrots, and rumbas (Buchanan 2004, 117). Restaurants at hotels like the Grand Hotel Bulgaria, Yonion Palace, *Slavyanska Beseda*, Battenberg, Balabanov, and bars like Alkazar, Maria Luisa, and Tsar Simeon became the center of postwar high culture, and served as the first locales in which new foreign styles from Europe cemented themselves as part of the bourgeois consciousness (Valchinova-Chendova 1991, 16).

As the capital and center of literature, art, music, and theater in Bulgaria at the time, Sofia became the first breeding ground for the salon/dance band that dominated the city's restaurants and nightspots through the end of the 1930s. One of the pioneering groups in Sofia was a sextet known as *Jazz Pickadilly* (*Dzhaz Pikadili*), which was active

[22] "Rom" is now widely considered to be the correct term for peoples historically referred to as *tsigani* (Gypsies) in Bulgaria. The etymology for proper Roma designation was established at the 1971 Romany World Congress and consists of Rom (singular), Roma (plural), and Romany (adjective).

starting around 1920. No recordings of the group are known to have survived, but photographs of the group show that their instrumentation is consistent with similar European ragtime orchestras of the time (saxophone, violin, banjo, piano, bass, and drums). The most notable members were drummer Vasil Georgiev, and his sister, pianist Vera Georgieva. Vasil's son Lyudmil later became one of the most well-known Bulgarian saxophonists of the 1950s and early-1960s. Vera was likely the first female jazz instrumentalist in Bulgaria, and the band also employed what may have been the country's first saxophone.

By the late-1920s, Sofia became home to even more groups as the population of the city increased and urban areas spread into the surrounding countryside, absorbing villages and towns into a loose conglomeration of neighborhoods. As with the few groups from the previous decade, few recordings survive from this era. The few firsthand accounts and records available suggest that repertoire was often determined by whatever styles were popular amongst city dwellers at that time. As with most places in Europe during the 1920s, recordings imported from abroad became the primary medium of dissemination. In addition, several Bulgarian record firms began their own production, starting with *Simonaviya* in 1924. *Simonaviya* was the brainchild of Simeon Petrov, a retired aviator who named the company after an amalgamation of his first name and the Bulgarian word for aviator. Though many of their early releases were of folk ensembles, the company did open a small market for locally-produced popular music, one which was filled by other labels in subsequent years. These new companies included a local subsidiary of London Record, Balkan (later the state label Balkanton), and Arfa

(Stoyanova 1990, 79). Together, the three labels formed the backbone of the burgeoning Bulgarian record industry, and were responsible for the dissemination of new popular musical styles amongst the elite of Sofia and other cities. Tenev states in his memoir that the Argentine tango particularly gained popularity in the early-1930s through the influx of recordings, and the style was subsequently adopted by theater and restaurant groups all over Sofia in an effort to cash in on the craze (Tenev 1997, 221).

By the end of the 1920s, jazz and dance music from Europe was being played in dance halls and restaurants, spun on gramophones, and broadcast on the developing programming of *Native Radio*. The first radio broadcast of a group playing jazz was of the five-piece orchestra of Stefan Kovachev in 1929 (Stoyanova 1990, 79). From there, other groups began to adopt jazz into their sets of salon arrangements (*salonni obratkovi*) in order to gain a competitive edge. By the early-1930s a few elite groups had established themselves amongst Sofia's small scene of restaurants and taverns.

One of these orchestras was led by Boris Leviev (1902 – 68), a violinist and bandleader who was involved in almost every facet of musical life in Sofia in the late-1920s and 1930s. Born in Sofia, the prodigiously talented Leviev moved to Germany in 1926 to study music at the Berlin Conservatory. Upon returning to Sofia in 1930 he was named conductor of the P. K. Stoichev Opera Theater, beginning his long career as an opera director and composer. That same year, he formed a small salon orchestra to play the restaurant at the Grand Hotel Bulgaria, a group that served as a doorway for many younger musicians who gained prominence in the late-1930s. His ensemble later became an integral part of the National Radio's first salon orchestra. Leviev's greatest

achievement, however, was his role in the birth of the Bulgarian recording industry, helping to develop several factories to produce and press gramophone disks and expanding the Odeon-Elekrik catalogue to include some of the first recordings of jazz orchestras in Bulgaria (Gadzhev 2010, 49).

Another popular orchestra leader was Atanas Sotirov, a virtuoso violinist and one of the most famous Bulgarian Rom musicians of his day. Sotirov established his first group in Plovdiv in 1926, playing at a bar called the "Monte Carlo". After moving to Sofia in the early-1930s, his band played frequently in the outdoor garden at *Slavyanska Beseda*, after the hotel opened in 1935 as a rival to the older Grand Hotel Bulgaria. Known popularly as the "Golden Gypsy" (*Zlatna Tsigana*), Tenev claimed "there was no other violinist like him, who emits such a great mood" (Tenev 1997, 222).

Some musicians from this period decided to try their fortune in other parts of Europe. One of the major success stories from outside of Bulgaria was that of Asparuh Leshnikov (1897 – 1978), a vocalist born in Haskovo who moved to Germany in the late-1920s. Once there he became lead tenor in a German group famously known as the Comedian Harmonists, a close harmony vocal ensemble that performed all over Central and Western Europe and appeared in several films between 1928 and 1934. At the height of the Comedian Harmonists' popularity, the group was forced to dissolve due to the increasing censorship of the Nazi government and the fact that three of the six members were Jewish. After the three fled in fear of their safety, Leshnikov and the remaining members attempted to reform as a group called Das Meistersextett that was considerably less successful. After the second group broke up, Leshnikov returned to Bulgaria in 1938

and continued a successful career as a vocalist until he was blacklisted from performance by the Bulgarian Communist Party in the early-1950s.

Another who made his fortunes abroad was Alberto Pinkas, a Jewish vocalist, composer, and arranger who also studied in Germany, albeit at the Jewish Religious Academy in Berlin. Spurning his trained profession as a rabbi, Pinkas found work as a vocalist at theaters in Berlin and recorded several works that were fairly popular in Europe during the early-1930s, including "Ramona" and "I Kiss Your Hand, Madam". He left Germany when the Nazis came to power, and eventually returned to Bulgaria and helped found the record company *Simonaviya* with Simeon Petrov.

Although difficult to describe most of these early groups as "jazz" bands per se, these groups are important as early vehicles through which repertoire associated with jazz in the 1930s made the transition from gramophone records to the bandstand in Bulgaria. The radio and salon orchestras also became a training ground for the first generation of musicians who adopted jazz as their primary means of musical expression. The most important of these groups to develop in the late-1930s – in many ways the first actual "jazz" band in Bulgaria – was Asen Ovcharov's *Jazz Ovcharov* (*Dzhaz Ovcharov*).

Jazz Ovcharov

The most popular and accomplished bandleader in pre-WWII Bulgaria was Asen Ovcharov (1906 – 67), who to this day is thought of by many as the leader of Bulgaria's first "jazz" big band. Born in the village of Harmanli, he moved to Sofia after completing his secondary education to study chemistry at Sofia University. Unable to

finish school because due to his lack of money, he started playing music in Sofia as a way to make ends meet. Finding his love in music, he studied composition and arranging with Andrei Stoyanov at the Music Academy in Sofia and became interested in jazz for the first time. He begins his career in the late-1920s playing piano in Boris Leviev's group, and continued as a session musician for *Native Radio* in 1932. There he became acquainted with Asen Zlatarov, a founding member of the Radio and lecturer on musical aesthetics. The lectures inspired Ovcharov to organize concerts and professional organizations dedicated to the dissemination of popular dance music. In 1933 he put together a small ensemble to play at a club called Alkazar, located on Tsar Osvoboditel Boulevard near the present-day location of the Grand Hotel Bulgaria, and considered to be the first Bulgarian jazz club. Alkazar was one of the meeting places for the Jazz Orchestral Club, a loose organization of writers, intellectuals, musicians, and others interested in jazz – similar in some ways to Hugues Panassié's famous "Hot Club du France" in Paris and other listening groups in Europe at that time. Boris Leviev was selected to be the first chairman of the club, but Alkazar folded after only a year due to poor management and in-fighting amongst members. Despite the dissolution of the Jazz Orchestral Club, Ovcharov was well known by this time and this reputation led to many other, equally lucrative opportunities in the coming years.

Ovcharov parlayed his education in composition into work as an arranger, and by the mid-1930s was adept at arranging popular music from outside of Bulgaria for small and large ensembles. He was also an accomplished accordionist, and mentored younger players until the end of his life. Although his skills as a player and arranger were well

known at the time, Ovcharov was best known for his skills as a bandleader, skills he developed running groups at Alkazar and pit orchestras in theaters and silent movie houses around Sofia. His reputation grew working with the bands of Angel Sladkarov and P. Dilkov in Sofia, and during summers working at the Sea Casino in Varna (Zhivkov 2001). Ovcharov ran his own small theater ensembles, which helped to realize his potential as a bandleader as well an arranger. With his popularity amongst Sofian musicians high, he formed *Jazz Ovcharov* in 1937, the first ensemble in Bulgaria patterned after the large American swing bands popular at the time. Tenev recalls the birth of this ensemble, which was the first major collaboration between the best jazz musicians in Sofia, writing that:

> The orchestra of Ovcharov began work in the newly opened fancy restaurant Bulgaria, which today is known by every Sofian, and quickly became sensation 'number one' in the world of dance music. This glory was however totally deserved not only because in [the band] played high-quality musicians, but because Asen Ovcharov himself was a person with an exclusively rich musical and conducting culture. Evident in this direction were his arrangements of a variety of classical pieces, in which, without losing the genius of their authors, sounded like the new time. And to be done like something, requires not only talent, but also great professional skill. Happily Ovcharov possessed both. And he administered them to the public from the heart, because it was apparent that he himself was enamoured with the music (Tenev 1997, 223).

Ovcharov had a reputation for being a stickler for detail who required a high level of professionalism during both rehearsals and performances, which earned him the nickname "the dog" (*kucheto*) amongst his musicians. He was also one of the first Bulgarians to master the practice of transcribing songs from gramophone recordings, adeptly writing down each part individually. This ability gave Ovcharov a vast array of current and popular repertoire from new records coming into Bulgaria, music his

competitors didn't have easy access to thereby cementing *Jazz Ovcharov's* reputation as the cutting edge dance band of the era. Capitalizing on these successes gave Ovcharov more and more prestigious concerts. In 1938 *Jazz Ovcharov* played for the opening of the second Grand Hotel Bulgaria. Three years later (1941) opera singer Angel Sladkarov commissioned the group to play at the Sofia city casino, and the successful engagement continued well into the early years of the war. There was even supposedly an invitation for *Jazz Ovcharov* to do a tour of Argentina sometime in the late-1930s, the trip bankrolled by an Austrian impresario impressed by a matinee performance given by the orchestra in 1938 (Gadzhev 2010, 99). At the last moment, the tour was cancelled for unknown reasons (most likely a disagreement over money), preventing *Jazz Ovcharov* from becoming the first Bulgarian dance band to tour outside of Europe.

The popularity of the band meant that *Jazz Ovcharov* was the biggest showcase for talent in the country at that time, and the band was responsible for launching the careers of many players who gained prominence over the next decade.
Among these are vocalists Lyusi Naidenova and Leni Vŭlkova, saxophonists Bozhidar Sakelarov, Nikola Diratsyan, and Niko Nisimov, trumpeter Stefan Kovanov, bassist Petŭr Petrov, drummers Stefan Mihailov and David Ashkenazi, and violinist Alexander Nikolov. *Jazz Ovcharov* even appeared in one postwar Bulgarian film, 1947's *Again in the Life* (*Otnovo v Zhivota*), which featured Asparuh Leshnikov as a soloist.

The one aspect that ultimately set *Jazz Ovcharov* apart from other groups in Sofia was the breadth of the ensemble's repertoire. Ovcharov's incredible ear and arranging skill allowed him to pick up songs fairly easily from recordings, which meant that his

band was the first to perform music for which sheet music was hard to come by in Bulgaria. In addition to the usual repertoire common to salon orchestras were songs by Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie and other American artists whose recordings were starting to find their way into Sofian hands.

Asen Ovcharov's rise to become the top bandleader in interwar Bulgaria was due to his ability realize the potential for modernization that late-19th century Bulgarian writers like Konstantinov saw in other Bulgarians. As an enterprising, gifted musician and arranger utilizing transcription to give himself a competitive advantage, Ovcharov was the very embodiment of the new bourgeois subject that had been built through modern ideas and institutions since 1878. More importantly, he was a potential ambassador for Bulgaria's new modern cultivation, sought after by foreigners to take his band throughout the world as a *modern* group, devoid of an Orientalized Balkan-ness.

But the subjectivity of the urban elite was not only built through the institutions of modernness, such as infrastructure and education. The development of a new aesthetic imagination after the national debacle of the First World War was also necessary to this subject formation. Although this interwar aesthetic happened first through art and literature, the application of its tenets by the bourgeois toward music resulted in one of the most emblematic Bulgarian musical works of the 1930s.

POSTWAR AESTHETIC THOUGHT AND THE EUROPEAN IMAGINATION

Toward the end of the First World War, Bulgarian artists and intellectuals began to feel the same kind of fatigue toward the philosophies and aesthetic hierarchies of

modern Europe---a fatigue similar to that experienced by their European counterparts. In Bulgaria, this fatigue took the shape of a deep antipathy with the institutionalization of art, which had started beginning with the Balkan Wars of 1912 – 14 when cultural institutions were placed under the Ministry of War and the General Staff of the Army. These included the Ministry of Popular Education, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia University, the National Theater, the National Opera, the National Library, the Archeological and Ethnographic Museum, and the School of Arts and Industry (Kebeltcheva 1999, 216). This capitalization of cultural institutions for the war effort continued through the First World War, in which the imperial aspirations for Dobrŭdzha, Macedonia, and an outlet on the Aegean Sea were of extreme precedence.

By 1918, the war was going badly for the Central Powers – Bulgaria included. Elena Kebeltcheva argues that the intelligentsia who were caught up in the war effort either by choice or by mandate, experienced "…pain not only over the destruction of harmony between society and the individual, but also over the role intellectuals themselves had in unleashing the war machine" (ibid. 231). She continues by describing various ways in which modernist artists and writers tried to separate themselves from their disastrous associations with the national-imperialist base of the previous decade in the years after the war. A group of Bulgarian artists and writers responded by critiquing the nationalist hubris embodied by the state, the monarchy, and the imperial aspirations of the Balkan and First World Wars.

Among the most important of these artists were poets Dimcho Debelianov (1887 - 1916), Teodor Trayanov, and writers Georgi Raichev and Geo Milev (1895 - 1925).

Their works combined influences of Expressionism and Symbolism to create a new outlet for the bourgeois gaze toward Europe, heavily distanced from pre-war ideas about nationalism and the construction of the ideal "Bulgarian." This new take on the modern came simultaneously with an intense exploration of "nativism" in the art of sculptor Ivan Lazarov (1889 - 1952) and writer Yordan Yovkov (1880 - 1937) that explored the condition of ordinary Bulgarians who had been affected by the experience of war (ibid. 228-40). The movement brought new focus on an abstract individualism that took hold of the new generation of the urban bourgeois coming of age in the late-1920s and early-1930s. Geo Milev's writings on "expressionism" from around 1920 in his journal called *Libra*, for example, inspired a host of other articles in Bulgarian journals on the nature of "modern" art and its connections to emotional intensity.

The critiques of European modernity after the war, and how the spread of jazz was related to these critiques, developed very differently in Western Europe. France, and in particular the Parisian bourgeoisie expressed their critique of modernity through what was called *l'art nègre*---an aesthetic that centered on the fascination with the African body and mind (Jackson 2003, 26-7). This aesthetic was in part a critical reevaluation of European philosophical and social values since the Enlightenment, values that were steadily replaced by some with the newer, more abstract sounds of music from outside of Europe. Jazz and blackness were thus intertwined, but in ways that reflected social and political trajectories that dated back well into the previous century. The proliferation of *l'art nègre* during the 1920s was facilitated by colonial holdings in Africa and the Caribbean (Haiti), the proliferation of minstrel and vaudeville troupes in the late-19th

century, the spread of American styles such as ragtime through sheet music and recordings, and the presence of James Reese Europe's regimental band during the First World War.

The Bulgarian bourgeoisie, on the other hand, did not have access to "blackness" as an alternative form of modern expression in the same way that the French, British, or Germans did. The generation of postwar writers in Bulgaria mentioned above was certainly aware of movements like *l'art nègre* through their contacts in Western Europe and translations of European novels into Bulgarian. I argue, however, that their philosophical perspectives on European modernism had nowhere near the same level of impact on bourgeois ideas and lifestyles as in other parts of Europe. The reason for the lack of a similar movement of *l'art nègre* in Bulgaria stemmed from the idea that bourgeois subject formation in Bulgaria after WWI did not require looking outward toward the African body in order to find "otherness."

A prime example of a work that critiqued African "otherness" as ubiquitous was a 1923 article by Panayot Todorov (1883-1943), an artist and writer popularly known as "Shirak Stirak," for the journal *Zlatorog* entitled "The Secret of the Primitive" (*Tainata na primitiva*). One of the few Bulgarians of the time to explicitly associate "jazz" with "primitive" rhythms stemming from Africa and elsewhere, he writes that:

> Within the search for primitive life remains a random, vague, but rather symptomatic approach and contact the clear efforts in this direction, expressed in art. These can't be considered lightly as fashion fads of "the hot" nor the success of the preaching of [Rabindrath] Tagore or the bizarre Negro orchestras that refined Europeans look to for their "pleasure," nor the power of new dances that have a coarse, strong rhythm of "savagery." Exotic desires are not random in our culture, and to experience a contemporary primitive [in the manner of] Robinson

> Crusoe or [the contemporary primitive's] passion for brutal acts of pure physical strength…these are all symptoms of the same pain: fatigue, complexity and the artificiality of the present lifestyle (Stirak 1923 c.f. Gadzhev 2010, 38).

In emphasizing the allure of African rhythms for the "enlightened" European (the allusion to Robinson Crusoe is quite telling), Stirak hints that such "exotic desires are not random in [Bulgarian] culture." This statement, I argue, is a tacit nod toward the "inner Orient" that was such a primary component of bourgeois consciousness during this time. For Stirak, Bulgarians did not need a "contemporary primitive" to cast their gaze upon. There already existed a "primitive" within the bourgeois subject as part of the negotiation of a modern European identity. Difference, in this case, did not need to be defined by "blackness," and thus jazz in early-20th century Bulgaria was not coded in the same racial fashions as the genre was throughout much of Western Europe during that time.

There are several additional reasons for the disjuncture between jazz and "blackness" in the bourgeois imagination in Bulgaria during this period. As I mentioned in the introduction, both the experience and imagination about Blacks amongst Bulgarians was incredibly diffuse until the early-1950s when ideological concerns aligned the state more directly against the United States and capitalism. In the interwar years Bulgaria was affected less by the United States. American films, though popular, were almost always mediated and disseminated through Western European and Russian circles. American novels were available but not widely read, and served to reinforce certain stereotypes about African-Americans. There was little to clue Bulgarians in on the social and cultural complexities of early 20th century America, especially with regard to race relations. There is no record of black minstrel or vaudeville groups playing in the

country before World War II, much less during the late-19th century. African-American musicians didn't regularly perform in Bulgaria until the 1960s, and there is little evidence that Bulgarians saw the black roots of jazz as anything more than ancillary. In light of this history, there is perhaps a certain irony that an Englishman was the first to "introduce" Bulgaria to the aesthetic of African-Americans. Much like many other institutions and signs of the modern in Bulgaria had been mediated through contact with the Western European powers.

The question, then, becomes this: if jazz's rise in Bulgaria wasn't reflective of the fascination with African-American music spawning from the postwar cultural nihilism in France, Great Britain, and Germany, what values *were* reflected, and why? Part of the answer lies in the post-WWI shift in aesthetic thought that privileged an amalgamation of the "native" and the "modern" in humanist terms that marked the end of the National Revival. What this shift accomplished in terms of the growth of jazz in Bulgaria was the dissolution of many of the anxieties of place and identity in bourgeois thought from before the First World War. As I showed in Konstantinov's and Stancioff's writings, outlining a conceptualization of meanings within modern subjectivity in Bulgaria was of deep concern in the late-19th century. Bourgeois subjects constantly grappled with their own perceived inner "Orient," which noticeably affected their relationship to the peasant majority and laid the groundwork for social and political strife. But the image of the peasant soldier and its aesthetic exploration, I argue, served to diffuse much of this existential angst and allowed for the first time a kind of modern subject that didn't grapple with complexes of desire and revulsion toward the past. By the beginning of the

1930s, a younger generation born just prior to and during the Wars were unencumbered by the same anxieties of identity that plagued the first generation of the urban bourgeois in Bulgaria. The development of leisure spaces and growth of the radio and recording industries created a Sofia whose inhabitants were acutely aware of their own modernness.

Take Stephan Groueff's memories about urban life in the 1930s in his memoir *My Odyssey*. Like Nadejda Stancioff, he was also the child of a government official who grew up within the trappings of the *haute bourgeoisie*. But Stancioff and Groueff constructed their notions of self differently. While Nadejda's anxieties were expressed through exoticism in her conceptualization of self, in contrast, Groueff constructed himself in terms of the objects of a bourgeois sensibility at ease with the subjective deterritorialization of 20th century life, what he calls the "promises of the so-called 'real world'." These promises were, he admits:

> no doubt naively romanticized by me, stimulated my imagination, and each discovery I was making during my late teenager years – a great novel, sex, symphonic music, the joys of skiing, jazz, first-hand reports of how people lived in Western Europe and America, the thrill of holding a pretty girl very close on the dancing floor, tales of great adventures, even the first tipsiness I experienced after two vermouths at "Maxim's," a cabaret off-limits for minors, – was to me a mere preview of fascinating things to come. I felt like an impatient spectator just lifting a small corner of the curtain and having a glance of the exciting stage behind it – the "real world" of great stories enacted by exceptional men and ravishing ladies (Groueff 2003, 45).

The taboo desires of an "inner Orient" that play out in earlier bourgeois writings is replaced here by an amalgamation of commodities, images, and visceral experiences that make up a conceptualization of the everyday, or "real life." Though his youthful gaze is oriented westward in some ways (i.e. "first-hand reports" of life in Western Europe and

the US), there is also a decided lack of hermeneutical intent in his account. The focus is on the experience of the objects themselves rather than in trying to account for their meanings in some broader sense. Some of this tone can be traced to the more general trend in postwar Bulgarian art and literature of the personal experience of the ordinary. But more to the point, urban bourgeois culture in 1930s Bulgaria had in many ways become less concerned with articulations of the anxieties and desires of national identity, and more oriented toward a state of a Heideggerian being-in-the-world with their own commodities and cultural productions. In other words, urban Bulgarian subjects in the 1930s were more concerned with the fruits of their leisure than with their own internalized contradictions of Europe/Orient.

This construction of self was clearly at odds with much of the political rhetoric at the time, which was again focused on the expansion of Bulgarian presence in the Balkans with the aid of German influence. But there was also a more heterogeneous detachment of the subject through deterritorialization that gradually built through the self-conceptualization of the bourgeois at this time. Konstantinov's work was one of the first examples, but there were also traces in the postwar writing on aesthetics by Milev, Stirak, and others. A transition occurred in the 1930s, where the purview of a subjectivity unencumbered by self anxiety between "European" and "Oriental" moved into the writing and expression of ordinary Bulgarians not affiliated with the artistic intelligentsia.

This deterritorialization of interwar bourgeois subjectivity becomes clearer when reading Groueff's later writings about the same period. *Crown of Thorns* (1987), his epic and detailed biography of the popular and controversial Bulgarian monarch Boris III

(1918-43), offers an effusive picture of the Bulgarian intelligentsia from around the time of Boris's ascension to political control in 1935, while at the same time trying to undermine the deeper bourgeois subjective engagement from the prism of history.

> What made the class difference was the degree of culture – how well read a person was, how well versed in the theater and music, how well informed about world affairs and scientific progress: In less than fifty years, the young kingdom had succeed in producing a noteworthy culture, and quite an impressive intelligentsia…Though it was not sophisticated in the Western sense of the word. Bulgarians are not by nature sophisticated people, nor had they had time to develop the refinement or the skepticism of the European civilizations, let alone to become cynical or *blasé*. They tended to be studious and sober, a little naïve, wholesome and ready to put the established world masters and thinkers on a pedestal. Hence, their cultural life had the vigor and simplicity of a young nation, more eager to learn and admire than to criticize and defy (Groueff 1988, 154-55).

On the surface this passage seems to be yet another articulation of "Europeans…but not quite," as in the 1890s. Although personal circumstance likely played a role in this assessment,[23] Groueff's *ex post facto* opining on class difference during his youth is interesting because of his use of *blasé* as a standard by which to judge modernness. Groueff is clearly using *blasé* here to mean "sophistication," the implication that Bulgarians, as a whole, lacked the complex subjective detachment of their European counterparts despite their best attempts. But as I explained in the introduction, *blasé*, when tied together with the history of *ennui* and boredom, also refers to a kind of detachment emphasized through action, intent, or language. The urban modern subject in 1930s Sofia was, I argue, quite *blasé* in exactly these terms, an affect that Groueff

[23] Groueff's father (Tsar Boris III's Chief of Cabinet) was executed by the communists in 1945. Groueff himself spent over 40 years in exile, living in Switzerland, France, and finally the US where he served as New York bureau chief of Paris-Match magazine until 1978 and worked for Radio Free Europe. The lack of "refinement and skepticism" he mentions may have been a barb at the inability of the Bulgarian intelligentsia to resist the influence and later subjugation by the Soviets, a fate not suffered by other Western European nations with the exception of (East) Germany.

himself describes liberally in the passage about the Sofia of his youth and throughout the prewar section of his memoir. His denial of *blasé* to Bulgarians as a whole, keeping them apart from what Barbara Goodstein calls the historical "democratization of skepticism" in modern Europe, is perhaps another form of self-othering similar to previous incarnations in Konstantinov and Stancioff.

To reinforce my point about the experience of *blasé*, take Dragan Tenev's biography, which I have quoted from throughout this chapter to give a sense of the lived urban subject during the early years of jazz in Bulgaria. His memoir is organized in part by delineating urban cultural objects and locales as themes (jazz and popular music, film, radio, opera, the automobile, Bulgaria Hall (*zala Bulgaria*), Slaveikov Square (*ploshtad Slaveikov*). This shows how important these objects were to Sofians as affects of modern life, as essentially parts of the construction of cosmopolitan selves in everyday contexts. The scope of subject construction became smaller and smaller, based on moments and feelings rather than in national or metaphysical terms. In arguing this, I'm not trying to say that national and other identities were liquidated or unimportant during this period. This historical narrative shows clearly that this is not the case, as evident in attitudes toward Macedonia and other areas with minority populations of Bulgarians. At the same time, though, I think that there was for the first time a widespread sense of a bourgeois consciousness in Bulgaria that wasn't solely concerned with anxiety over a sense of place in modern Europe. These concerns could be deferred in small moments even if subjected to a kind of "eternal return" qua Nietzsche. Jazz, and the moments of leisure that the music produced, was enabled primarily by this detachment, this *blasé*. Thus stands the

uniqueness of jazz in Bulgaria during this area, even as most of the repertoire and styles for groups came from a wide variety of sources. The first "Bulgarian" jazz, perhaps, rested in the realm of the *meta*.

Ultimately, the importance of the early jazz groups in Sofia, and Bulgaria generally, was as an articulation of these modern becomings – the long and subtle work away from the anxieties of place and identity that plagued Bulgarians for years. These bands and their music were not simply a mimetic gesture toward some abstract notion of European-ness. Nor were they indicative of engagement, fetish, or commodification of African-American culture. Rather, it is better to see them as part of a broader cosmopolitan ordinary – a productive boredom, a form of *blasé* – that allegorized the hopes of the urban bourgeoisie to live as modern selves, simply part of the world. Given the historical gaze of Western Europeans toward the Balkans – through travel literature and with characters such as Bai Ganyo playing the role of national archetype in certain circles – carving out such spaces becomes essential. Bourgeois leisure became ever more important in this instance, because it served as one of the few spaces through which this cosmopolitan ordinary can literally be played and performed for themselves and for each other. The phantasmagoria of backwardness could be kept at bay through a haze of smoke, dance, and drink for listeners and musicians alike.

With this in mind, I conclude this chapter by more thoroughly analyzing one piece of popular music from the time – Yossif Tsankov's "The Caravan" (*Kervanŭt*), a popular tango in the late-1930s and early-40s in Europe. The piece's constitution and history, I argue, lie at the heart of the place of jazz in the entire ontology of becoming-bourgeois in

Bulgaria in the early 20th century. Most of all, the piece is indicative of the relationship between bourgeois leisure in the 1930s and the manifestation of *blasé* as a mediation of the political strife happening in Bulgaria and throughout Europe on the eve of the Second World War.

Yossif Tsankov and *Kervanŭt*

Kervanŭt's composer Yossif Tsankov was born in Ruse in 1911, and as a youth attended the prestigious Robert College in Istanbul.[24] By age 19, he had written his first hit song, 1930's "Come With Me To Hawaii" (*Ela s Men v Havai*). From there he worked for the National Radio in 1936, programming pieces for the children's ensembles before being appointed resident composer at the Odeon Theater in 1937, where he composed dozens of operettas for performance there over the next four years. He continued his studies in composition with P. Stefanov and V. Stoyanov while simultaneously working on a degree in law, which he completed in 1939. Tsankov's experience also extended into the recording industry, where he served as head of the Sofia-based London Records from 1937 to 1940, a job that he parlayed into being appointed the head of the state-recording company Radioprom (later and more famously Balkanton) in 1951, a position he held until his death twenty years later. Although his career spanned roughly four decades, his work during the 1930s and early-1940s was

[24] 2011 marks the Tsankov's 100th birthday, and on June 1st of 2010 the Ministry of Culture was submitted a project initiative by the Teodosii Turnovski Association for the Storage, Distribution, and Promotion of Cultural and Historical Values. The project is being led by Vanyo Petrov and includes a fictional biography of Tsankov, a commemorative postage stamp and coin, a national tour with modern interpretations of Tsankov's songs, and a monument constructed in his hometown of Ruse ("Poshtenska" 2010).

profoundly influenced by the popular styles of the day – foxtrot, rumba, and especially tango. He was also a prolific operetta composer during this time, though many of his dozens of scores were destroyed in fires during the Second World War.

Tsankov wrote *Kervanŭt* in 1937, a tango for salon orchestra with strings that played upon the exotic sounds referential to the imagination about the North African desert. Although the song has been recorded a number of times over the years (recently by Bulgarian singer Nadia Boteva in 1996), the first recording was the only version to gain mainstream popularity outside of Bulgaria.[25] The record was produced in 1941 in Hollywood, sung by Ekaterina Vankova. Vankova was a frequent collaborator of Tsankov's during those years, having also recorded his song "Charming Tales" (*Charovna Prikazka*) in Berlin that same year at Kristall Studios in Berlin with the Heinz Munsonius Orchestra. *Kervanŭt* was a hit in Bulgaria, and the recording moved throughout Europe, gaining popularity throughout the late-1930s. The song was incredibly popular amongst British and American troops fighting Erwin Rommel in the deserts of North Africa in 1941, to the point that Radio London played the song every morning at 9:00 AM in their morning broadcast. Musicologist Angel Nachev claims that the song's success made Tsankov so popular that his other works were brought to the

[25] A second version was recorded in 1964 by Bozhidar Sakelarov's *Jazz of the Optimists* (*Dzhaz na Optimistite*) on the state-produced Balkanton label (also mentioned in Chapter 2). This version has been released several times since the original release, most recently on a compilation entitled *Yosif Tsankov – In Memoriam*, featuring multi-genre work from throughout his career, though mostly from the 1960s and 70s. The Sakelarov version also adorns the opening credits for Jacky Comforty's documentary *The Optimists*, which chronicles the experiences of Jewish Bulgarians during the Second World War.

attention of some of the most famous singers of that time, such as Josephine Baker, Claudio Villa, Arturo Testa, and Siegfried Valendi (Mitev 2010).

The 1941 recording of *Kervanŭt* begins with an 8-measure fanfare of the song's theme played by the orchestra, carried by the strings and an accordion countermelody. The next 8-bars feature a reprise of the theme by the accordion, supported by brass and percussion. The 16-bar phrase serves as an introduction to the verses, which is preceded by a 1-bar piano interlude.

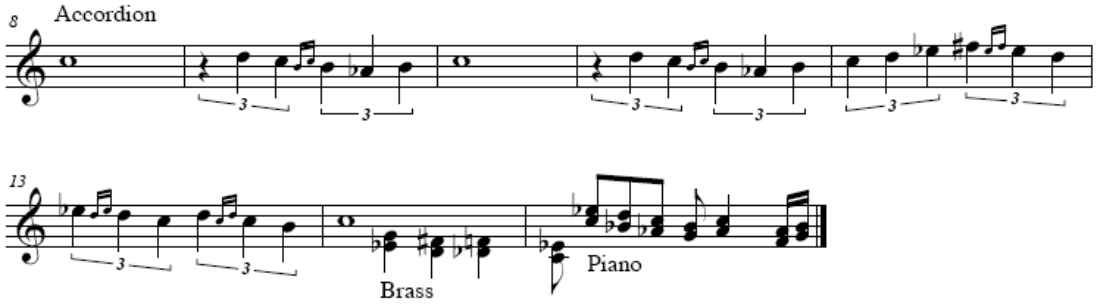

Figure 1.1: *Kervanŭt*, mms. 8 – 15.

The vocal melody, which enters in the next phrase, is doubled by the accordion (playing an octave lower) and by violin, which plays more freely heterophonic interpretation of the melody. The solo accordion reprises between the first and second instances of the chorus, after a reharmonized version of the introduction, this time in the brass. The song ends after the second chorus, having only one verse – likely to fit within the approximately 2:50 recording time of the standard 78-RPM record in 1941.

The use of accordion to introduce the melody contains both local and cosmopolitan registers. On one hand, the accordion had become a very popular instrument in urban ensembles in Bulgaria by the late-1930s, especially for playing *hora* and in professional Romani groups in conjunction with the clarinet. Accordion also moved the tonality of village melodies toward Western diatonic harmony (Buchanan 2004, 115). In the context of the style of tango, the *bandoneón* (a cousin of the accordion) was a popular instrument in Argentina and Uruguay and an essential piece of the *orquesta típica*, the ensemble historically most idiomatic of tango performance in South America at that time.

The lyrics are awash in orientalist and romanticized images about the desert (golden sand), the night, and intense love and affection – though these meanings were all but assuredly lost on the Western audiences who heard the recording and lacked fundamental knowledge of the Bulgarian language.

Verse:	
Chui moita pesen v noshta	Listen to my song in the night
i uznai lyubovta, shto v sŭrtse mi gori	and see the love that in my heart burns
Spi krai nas, az te chakam togaz	Sleep beside us, I am waiting for you then
(pak ne e tsyala, az te chakam sega)	(Again it's not a full moon, I am waiting for you now)
v samota do zori	alone until the dawn
Chorus:	
Bavno kervanŭt minava v noshtniya mrak	Slowly the caravan passes into the night darkness
svoyata muka togava peya ti pak	then I sing my sorrow to you again
Zlatniyat pyasuk v bezkraya neide mulchi	The golden sand remains quiet in infinity
pŭlni sŭs sladka omaya sa moite ochi	full with sweet pleasure are my eyes

Fig. 1.2: *Kervanŭt* lyrics, 1937, written by Y. Tsankov

In many ways, *Kervanŭt* is similar to other mass-produced popular songs from Europe and the United States in the early part of the 20th century that express an aesthetic of oriental exoticism. And that, essentially, is precisely what makes the piece so intriguing. *Kervanŭt*, I argue, is such a naked display of the "Orient" commodified that it lacks the air of self-exoticism that had hovered phantasmagorically over Bulgarian subject formation since the Liberation. In fact, the song's greatest appeal was amongst British soldiers fighting in North Africa, making it one of the first purely bourgeois, urban pieces of popular music by a Bulgarian composer to find popularity outside of Bulgaria. At the behest of the British Army, the commercial recording was made in Hollywood, ironically fueling the Allied war effort as Bulgaria slipped further into league with the Axis powers in the early-1940s. *Kervanŭt's* popularity in these circles did not rely on an exploitation of the inner-exoticism of Bulgaria's past – this was exoticism for its own sake, as *blasé* an exoticism as there can be.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of early jazz in Bulgaria was inexorably tied to the development of an urban bourgeois consciousness in post-Liberation Bulgaria. As Sofia grew from 19th century provincial town into the center of Bulgarian cosmopolitan expression, jazz became an integral part of that cosmopolitanism. Jazz was also an expression of a shift in the identity and subject construction of urban elites, as they alleviated the anxieties of existing between European and Oriental through leisure spaces and *blasé* attitudes. In

other words, the first jazz bands were paramount in the attempts to become European, emulating an urban expression that was now within Bulgaria's reach.

The pinnacle of the first modern bourgeoisie in Bulgaria was in 1937. That year the new Grand Hotel Bulgaria was built in Sofia, *Jazz Ovcharov* was formed, and Yossif Tsankov composed *Kervanŭt*. Amidst the threat of violence in Europe, Bulgarians seemed to finally stake their claim as members of the continent's worldly, cosmopolitan subjects. Such a pinnacle was, unfortunately, short-lived. By 1943, Bulgaria's role in the Axis war effort was precarious, and within a year the constitutional monarchy was overthrown. The new Soviet-backed communist government, armed with Stalinist ideology brought in by a host of exiles educated in the Soviet Union, declared their own war on abstract notions of "bourgeoisness". What followed for bourgeois culture as a whole, and jazz more explicitly, was an era of dislocation and uncertainty. Jazz was never completely banned by the Bulgarian Community Party in the late-1940s and early-1950s. But what was aesthetically, politically, and ideologically acceptable during this period was never certain, even amongst the communist hierarchy. Musicians suffered deeply as their everyday lives oscillated between moments of tedium and moments of terror in this uncertain political era. One certainty, however, was that the word "bourgeois" and anything associated with it became suspect in Bulgaria for the next fifty-five years.

Chapter 2: "Dying is an art, like anything else": Jazz and the Taboo of "Bourgeois" Expression in Early Communist Bulgaria

"*Dying is an art, like anything else*."

-Sylvia Plath[1]

As one walks uphill into the part of Plovdiv known as "the old city" (*stariyŭt grad*), which contains the old houses that occupied the Christian Quarter during the late Ottoman period and the Roman-era amphitheatre, there sits a life-size bronze statue of a smiling gentleman, in his mid-late 40s, sitting on a perch and holding a violin to his knee just outside of the building that houses the Music Academy of Plovdiv. This statue is the monument to Alexander Nikolov, a popular musician known as "Sasho Sladura" on account of his charming demeanor and legendary exploits in womanizing. He was a lynchpin of many of the early jazz groups discussed in Chapter 1, and one of the best musicians that Plovdiv produced during the first half of the twentieth century. His musicianship was only rivaled by his deft sense of humor, particularly toward political and social matters. During the 1950s he was a mainstay at the Hotel Bulgaria, which maintained its reputation after WWII as one of the finest spots for live music in Sofia. In an era when such outspokenness was both rare and dangerous, Nikolov never hesitated to publicly dispense criticism of the regime veiled within the confines of a joke. Filmmaker and producer Nikola Korabov called him "the most interesting person from those times"

[1] The Sylvia Plath poem "Ariel" is quoted in Taussig 2001, 305.

(Gŭrdev 2008).[2] Nikolov's reputation was such that after his death in 1961, the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) destroyed his arrest records and surveillance files in an attempt to ensure that he was all but forgotten by later generation of Bulgarians.

The monument bearing Sasho's visage was the idea of Dr. Georgi Lazarov, a physician and classmate of Sladura's from the French College in Plovdiv. Now settled and working in Baltimore, Lazarov donated money through a local Orthodox priest named Kamen Vichev sometime in the late-1990s to commission the statue somewhere near the old Roman-era amphitheatre that is the architectural centerpiece of that part of the city. Sculptor Danko Dankov was charged with casting the statue, and his vision created Sasho seated quietly with his violin on his knee. Despite protests of the local chapter of the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the statue was unveiled in September 2002 and has since remained a popular attraction as part of tourism strategies in the municipality of Plovdiv.[3]

The austere monument is adorned with a plaque, on which the inscription reads "In Memory of Sasho Sladura and the makers of culture, perished from the Communist regime" (*V Pamet na Sasho Sladura 1916-1961 i deitsite na kulturata zaginali ot komunisticheskiya rezhim 1944-1989*). The visage of Sasho sits atop the marble stone that the plaque adorns, directly linking his body with the memories of the bodiless and forgotten "culture makers" who perished during the communist period. Sladura's

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[2] Karabov planned to write and film a biopic about Nikolov in the mid-1990s entitled "Before Death" (*Predi Smurtta*). The project was cancelled because of lack of funding (Gŭrdev 2008).

[3] The Bulgarian Socialist Party was the reorganization of the BCP after the fall of the communist government in 1989, and remains one of the most viable political parties in Bulgaria to the present day. The BSP's protests stemmed from the statue memorializing *en masse* those killed by the communist regime, a charge the Socialists have been more than willing to refute in the past. See Bikova 2002.

presence indicates that what needed to be remembered was not only the repressed artistic intelligentsia abstracted *en masse* on the plaque, but every musician that Sasho ever played with from the early part of his career. Although some of these musicians went on to successful careers in the Bulgarian musical industry despite their associations with such "decadent" bourgeois music, others like Asparuh Leshnikov and Ekaterina Vankova simply vanished as their careers became irrecoverable.

In this chapter I explore jazz's place in the erosion of interwar bourgeois subjectivity under the guise of communist hegemony through the careers of musicians like Sladura and others. Among jazz musicians as it was for most other members of the urban Bulgarian intelligentsia, life in postwar Bulgaria was fundamentally upended by the vast social and cultural changes enacted by the Stalinist-influenced BCP. In order to more broadly understand how the first generation of jazz musicians in Bulgaria grappled with this new way of life, we must first look at the process by which the bourgeois subject under Soviet-style communism was displaced by an equally idealized, wholly ideological communist subject – the moral citizen of socialism. This transition is best documented in changes in the construction and state reception of the modernist autobiography and travelogue, two types of literature that, as I argued in Chapter 1, were essential in the construction of a post-Liberation bourgeois consciousness in Bulgaria. The very notion of a "bourgeois" self-reflexive expression, as exemplified by these forms, became suspect to the Communist authorities. The consequences for engaging in such modes of self-exploration – whether through art, literature, or music – involved bureaucratic interference, loss of work, denial of performance licences and visas,

imprisonment, torture, or assassination. For jazz musicians who maintained stable urban lifestyles in the years prior to 1944, the fractured realities of the enactment and enforcement of social codes toward anything cast as decadent expressivity created a nervous, shifting everyday environment. They never knew where they stood with regard the regime on a day to day basis, and persecution was often swift and thoroughly destructive.

In making Bulgaria into a new, modern communist society, the BCP attempted to replace the selfish desires of bourgeois life with an ethical devotion to the ideology as arbiter of proper cultural mores. This process was more than just a series of purges within Bulgarian society over a few years. It was an institutionalized affect of terror that in many ways stretched over the entire length of the communist period, and had far-reaching consequences for all creative outlets of Bulgarian society. At the heart of this affect was something deeper than simply actualizing the aesthetic tenets of socialist realism, or buying into the economic ideology of the Five Year Plans. In fact, the BCP attempted to fundamentally break down the very urban bourgeois subjectivity cultivated in the late-19th and early-20th centuries, and reconstruct it into a new kind of hegemonic socialist subject. This new subjectivity was to be in many ways one of subjugation,[4] determined by an ideology that demanded that individuals willingly subject themselves unquestionably to the state apparatus and to police those who were not so dogmatic. Designed as a literal embodiment of Foucault's social panopticon, this socialist subject

[4] For the perspective of subjectivity as subjugation from the perspective of feminist scholarship in the United States, see Butler 1997 and Das 2000.

married together the eyes of the citizen and the eyes of the state. In other words, the self-*reflexive* urban subject, always questioning one's place within the world, was slowly becoming replaced by the communist ideal of the self-*interested* urban subject, one who enacted a solipsistic view of their own existence only within the parameters of the BCP and the life that the government provided.[5]

JAZZ IN BULGARIA DURING AND AFTER WWII

The bloodless coup against the Regency that occurred on September 9th, 1944 marked a turning point for the prime Sofian jazz bands that gained in popularity around the time of WWII. Social life in Sofia for the interwar bourgeoisie continued relatively unfettered during the first years of the war (Miller 1975, 165). Axis successes in France, the Soviet Union, and North Africa ensured Bulgaria's relative safety, and modest military successes such as the occupations of Vardar and Greek Macedonia and Thrace kept morale amongst most of the public high. By the late summer of 1943, these fortunes began to change significantly. The sudden death of Tsar Boris III in August prompted wild speculation that he had been secretly murdered by the Germans for contemplating peace with the Allies. Rumors of an Allied invasion of the Balkans greatly concerned the

[5] I emphasize *urban* in my analysis for two reasons. The first is to emphasize the work conducted by communist ideologues on bringing urban elites into the State's fold. The goal of Chervenkov's 1949-50 purge of the intelligentsia and student populations was to reshape the attitudes of the former bourgeoisie, and why urbanites bore the brunt of that purge's violence. Similar purges occurred in the countryside amongst the former landed gentry in the attempt to promote a system of collective agriculture similar to the Soviet model of the early-1930s (Creed 1998), but I would argue that this was a different manifestation of how state power shaped the citizenry through violence and imprisonment. The second is to distanciate from the use of folklore and village traditions to construct a modern socialist Bulgarian art, most notably in the commissioning of amateur and professional folk ensembles under state patronage like the Philip Koutev (Sofia) and Thracian (Plovdiv) Ensembles (Buchanan 1991, 2006).

new Regency, led by the intensely pro-German Bogdar Filov, and faith in Hitler to protect Bulgaria began to wane significantly. Their faith was all but crushed when Bulgaria began to suffer its first extended campaign of bombing at the hands of the Allies. Air raids targeting Sofia on November 14th, 1943 and January 10th, 1944 caused mass panic amongst residents unaccustomed to the violence that had plagued British and German cities for years. Sofia's heavily-centralized concentration of buildings made the city an easy target for British bombers, and the lack of comprehensive civil defense brigades and anti-aircraft emplacements ensured that the bombs caused absolute chaos. Hundreds of buildings and homes were destroyed, and incendiary bombing throughout March 1944 destroyed landmarks such as the National Theater and Holy Synod. Thousands of Sofians fled into the countryside, clogging roads and railways, taxing the food and sheltering capabilities of surrounding villages at the height of Bulgarian winter. Those few that remained in Sofia suffered under disruptions of public services and frequent food shortages (ibid. 166-68).

Of the major pre-war dance bands centered in Sofia, *Jazz Ovcharov* thrived the most, maintaining their place as Bulgaria's best-known and most popular jazz group. Prior to the major bombings of Sofia, the group served as a house band in the restaurant at the prestigious Hotel Bulgaria starting in 1942. The band performed during summer months at resort hotels on the Black Sea coast, like the Astoria in Varna, for a combination of Bulgarian and German soldiers, Russian exiles, and (after the war) tourists. The band received a welcome infusion of young talent during these years, the most notable of which was undoubtedly 18-year old vocalist Lea Ivanova, who made her

debut with *Jazz Ovcharov* in 1942. Born in Dŭpnitsa, south of Sofia, Ivanova sang in children's choir of the Bulgarian Exharch and at Robert College in Istanbul before moving to Sofia to study at the Arts Academy. After a stint with Leon Alfasa's *Slavyanska Beseda* orchestra at age 17, she quickly became the headliner for *Jazz Ovcharov* and gained the reputation as one of the finest vocalists in the country along with Leni Vŭlkova and Lyusi Naidenova.

Ovcharov's relative dominance in Sofia and in the Black Sea resorts during the war was challenged by other large ensembles seeking to build similar reputations. Alfasa's orchestra began a residency at *Slavyanska Beseda* in 1941, competing directly with Ovcharov's residency at Hotel Bulgaria for both patrons and musical talent. For example, Lea Ivanova switched from Alfasa to Ovcharov during this period. In Plovdiv, saxophonist/clarinetist Dimitar Ganev formed the *Jazztempo Orchestra* (*Orkestŭr Dzhaztempo*), a band modeled in instrumentation and repertoire on Benny Goodman's orchestra that drew many members from the city's French language high school (Gadzhev 2010, 107-8).

The most successful of these new orchestras was the fortuitously named *Jazz of the Optimists* (*Dzhaz na Optimistite*), formed in Sofia in January of 1944. Saxophonist Dimitar Simeonov recalls that the group's name came from Sasho Sladura, the result of his already-famous wit and charm. "[Sasho] was one of the leaders of the orchestra," he stated. "Our group was assembled, we didn't have a name, but one day he arrives, watches us sit crestfallen and says 'you are optimists if you will find work.' From there [the name] remained as 'The Orchestra of the Optimists'" (Moskov 2009).

The band's founder was Bozhidar Sakelarov, a saxophonist who like Ovcharov started his musical career with Boris Leviev in 1929. Upon moving to Berlin to study architecture, he continued playing on the side with the dance orchestras of Ray Forrest and Herbert Beck, returning to Sofia upon graduating in 1935. For the next eight years, he played and arranged music for *Jazz Ovcharov* until a business conflict split the group apart while in Burgas in late-1943. The exact nature or cause of the split is unknown, but Sakelarov stayed in Burgas with a handful of former *Jazz Ovcharov* members. Together they formed their own band.

Sakelarov's 11-piece ensemble most unique attribute was that most of the members were of Jewish descent. Jewish musicians were integral to Bulgaria's urban musical scenes starting in the late-1920s, playing in salon orchestras, symphony orchestras, and the ensembles housed at Bulgarian National Radio. Many of the earliest Bulgarian bandleaders, including Boris Leviev and Alberto Pinkas, were Jewish. However, Bulgaria's alliance with Nazi Germany, made official by the signing of the Tripartite Pact in 1941, made life difficult for the thousands of Bulgarian Jews. Forced to wear yellow stars on their jacket lapels and sleeves and register with local authorities, their ability to play in public was hampered considerably. To alleviate some of their existential misery Jewish members of *Jazz of the Optimists* Niko Nissimov (saxophone) and David Erskin (drums) mentioned in interviews that they played Sunday concerts for Jewish patrons whenever possible.[6]

[6] These interviews and firsthand accounts from Nissimov and Eskin, as well as other Bulgarian Jews, were compiled by filmmaker Jaky Comforty in his recently released documentary *The Optimists* (2008).

Many of these Jewish musicians were eventually forced into labor camps and road construction crews, with the threat of deportation to concentration camps hanging over their heads on a daily basis. Though scores of Jews in Sofia and Bulgaria proper were spared deportation, many still left after the war for either the United States or the newly formed state of Israel.[7] Among those saved from deportation was Nissimov, who was forced to work as a pharmacist in the Thracian town of Hanti until the dramatic events of 1943 uprooted and placed him on a train bound for Auschwitz.[8] The train never left the station, thus sparing him from the assuredly fatal journey.

After his release in December 1943, Nissimov and other members rejoined with other members of *Jazz of the Optimists* in a military band that was sent to play for soldiers in Yugoslavia and the Hungarian town of Klagenfurt (*Optimists* 2008). When the war ended, the orchestra weathered the early years of communist rule as the house band at the Astoria in Varna. Though Nissimov and Eskin left the group and immigrated to Israel in 1948, Sakelarov's band continued unabated, and took advantage of Ovcharov's troubles in the early-1950s to become the premier jazz big band of that decade. *Jazz of the Optimists* took over as house band at the Hotel Bulgaria in 1954, and

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7. The actual reasons for the sparing of Bulgaria's Jewish population have been subject to considerable debate. At issue is the claim of the "humanitarianism" of the Bulgarian government and Orthodox Church, who have historically used the sparing of the Jewish population of Bulgaria as evidence of their lack of overt complicity in the Nazi's Final Solution. Shelomo Alfassá, for example, argues that the 50,000 Jews spared in Bulgaria proper have obscured the 13,000 Jews the Bulgarian government dispossessed and deported from occupied Greece and Macedonia in March 1943 (Alfassá 2011), Furthermore, the order preserving Bulgaria's Jews may have been possible only because of the sacrifice of Greek and Macedonian Jews. For further reading on the complex issue of Bulgaria's Jews during WWII, see Chary 1972, Cohen and Assa 1977, and Groueff 1987, 355-61.

8 Hanti was located in a part of Thrace occupied by Bulgaria as part of their alliance with the Axis powers. Of 11,400 Jews deported to Treblinka death camp in March 1943, only 70 were ever seen again (Miller 1975, 103).

became popular through a mix of former members like Sladura coupled with a host of young talent that came of age in the postwar years. Many of these players came from a group called *Jazz of the Youth* (*Dzhaz na Mladite*), most notably Simeonov and vocalist Liana Antoneva. Lea Ivanova joined the group in 1956 as she was entering the prime of her career, and frequently sang with the group when she returned from international tours starting in 1957. The group, in many different guises, kept *Jazz Ovcharov*'s old gig at the Hotel Bulgaria until 1960, and Sakelarov continued running *Jazz of the Optimists* well into the next decade – long after their wartime rivals had disbanded, giving opportunities to young musicians like the later-famous Petŭr Slavov, who played bass for the group at the age of 15 in 1965.

Among the group's most notable accomplishments in the 1960s was a 1964 recording on the state label Balkanton of Yossif Tsankov's piece *Kervanŭt* that created an audible link to the dance band repertoire of the pre-communist years. Of course, Tsankov's work was relatively safe fare in the 1960s, given that he was the head of development for Balkanton at that time, and one of the country's most highly recognized composers of popular music. Indeed, Sakelarov and his group survived a very contentious period for jazz and popular music in Bulgaria, during which the aesthetic tenets of Stalinist socialist realism drove the BCP's discourse on art, literature, and music. *Jazz of the Optimists*' relatively quiet decade of the 1950s was not shared by many of their counterparts.

KONTSLAGERA BLUES

The aforementioned banning of the saxophone in 1949 marked a period of intensified surveillance and policing of musical activities. In due course, shortly after Dimtrov's death and Chervenkov ascension as First Secretary of the BCP, Stalinist-style purges of the artistic intelligentsia and residual bourgeois institutions began throughout the country. *Jazz Ovcharov*, a mainstay at Sofia's hotels and casinos since the mid-1930s, was an obvious target. The end came, perhaps ironically, on the heels of a potential professional triumph. In 1949 at the height of the purges, the band received an invitation to tour the United States, the first Bulgarian jazz group to receive such an offer. The tour was brokered by colleagues of Ovcharov's from Great Britain, whom he had exchanged recordings and sheet music during the brief Allied occupation of Bulgaria toward the end of the war. Naturally, this invitation aroused the wrong kind of attention for the band at a moment when such attention was quite dangerous, and Ovcharov himself was soon arrested by the authorities. Officially, he was charged with crimes against public taste for "jazzing" the proletarian hymn "Internationale" (*Internatsionala*), a practice ironically enacted by many Soviet jazz composers a decade earlier as a means of creating an ideologically-palatable popular music that allowed them to keep in Stalin's good graces. In Ovcharov's case, he was arrested on a convenient charge that encompassed his real crime in the eyes of the BCP – collaboration with foreigners, which was interpreted at that time as anti-Soviet espionage. Ovcharov and his wife were swiftly convicted and sent to the "gulag" (*kontslagera*) in Tutukan, and later transferred to the

notorious camp at Belene.[9] Upon his release in 1952, he was arrested again and sentenced to six years in prison, which he served at Belene. Barred from returning to Sofia after being released in 1957, he settled in Plovdiv, where he spent most of the rest of his life teaching, all the while in poor health from his time in prison. Although his career as a major bandleader was ostensibly finished, he taught accordion at a small music school until his death in 1967, cultivating several young musicians who contributed to the Bulgarian music industry in the 1960s.[10]

Saxophonist Lyudmil Georgiev, founder of *Jazz of the Youth* in 1946 and later member of The Optimists during their heyday in the 1950s, suffered a similar fate in May 1949. The rehearsals for *Jazz of the Youth*, which took place in Georgiev's apartment in Sofia, brought the ire of the neighborhood BCP secretary because of the noise and musical content. Subsequently, Georgiev was served a subpoena by a militia lieutenant to report to a labor detail in the village of Chamkovtsi. Upon arrival, Georgiev was put to work digging a canal from Chamkovtsi to Oryahovo, on the banks of the Danube River. In addition to the physical labor, the head of the camp allowed him to form a small band with other imprisoned musicians, playing repertoire from the Sofian dance bands, rumba, tango, and certain Russian songs (*Chudesa* 2007).

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[9] The horrors of these *kontslageri* and the everyday toll taken on their inhabitants are catalogued in a series of essays by Tsvetan Todorov entitled *Voices from the Gulag: Life and Death in Communist Bulgaria*. Although the infamous Belene was closed in 1953 as part of the gradual shift away from hard-line Stalinist policies, the camp reopened several times over the next couple of decades: in 1956 during the mass suppression of the intelligentsia after the Hungarian uprising, and again in the mid-1980s as part of the forced "Bulgarization" of the Turkish minority. For a pointed critique of Todorov's text arguing that he appropriates and recontextualizes the prisoner narratives to reinforce a sense of Western moral superiority toward communism, see Kaneva 2007, 44-61.

[10] It is worth noting that several musicians in Ovcharov's Plovdiv-based big band later formed "White, Green, and Red" (*Beli, Zeleni, i Cherveni*), one of the most influential jazz groups in Bulgaria during the late-1960s and 1970s.

Women were not spared the wave of arrest and imprisonment of musicians. Lea Ivanova, the young star of *Jazz Ovcharov* who was one of Bulgaria's most popular singers by the early-1950s, suffered as well because of her association with the orchestra. Around the same time as Ovcharov she was sent to the *kontslagera* in Nozharevo where she spent most of her days making bricks. Her confinement resulted in various health problems that plagued her for most of the rest of her life. Upon her internment at Nozharevo, the brigade chief responsible for the women's camp took one look at her and couldn't believe that the singer of "Chico from Puerto Rico" (*Chiko ot Porto Riko*) was in his camp, barely recognizable from the stress of forced physical labor (Klenskova 2006, 14).

The brutal treatment suffered by Ovcharov, Ivanova, and other musicians, artists, writers, and intellectuals during the period of Chervenkov's government has to be seen in broader terms than simply the liquidation of bourgeois remnants from before the coup of September 1944. Incarceration in the *kontslagera* had ethical and ideological underpinnings which were most intense during the years in which Stalin was still alive, yet maintained vestiges well into the early-1960s. In order to understand the bases for these underpinnings, and strategies for their deployment from the upper echelons of the BCP, it is necessary to explore the construction and application of the aesthetics of socialist realism in Bulgaria. Socialist realism defined much of the reconceptualization of subjectivity and citizenship in early communist Bulgaria, and must be thought of as concomitant to the rise to power of the BCP itself. Though the effect that socialist realism had on jazz was palpable, the philosophy was far more reaching throughout

Bulgarian society in the late-1940s and early-1950s. Simply put, the new aesthetics of communist Bulgaria informed the thorough deconstruction of the bourgeois subject that had been at play in Bulgaria since the late-19th century.

THE RISE OF THE BCP AND SOCIALIST REALISM

Between 1944 and 1947 the BCP worked to consolidate a base of power through dealing with rival parties, and didn't assume total control over the country until the ratification of the "Dimitrov Constitution" on December 4th, 1947. This act officially created the People's Democracy of Bulgaria and began the intense, ideological makeover of the Bulgarian state. From this point forward, Georgi Dimitrov and his successor Vŭlko Chervenkov further entrenched themselves in Stalinist practices in an attempt to completely remake the Bulgarian populous into the pristine image of the hard-working and conscientious socialist citizen. While the new constitution included the guarantee of individual rights for all citizens (including women) and the right to private property, these rights were effectively curtailed by various actions by the BCP during the late-1940s. These acts included the BCP's attempt at complete control of all means of mass agricultural and industrial production and, more importantly, the right of citizens to only engage in occupations that were not "to the detriment of the public good" (Crampton 2007, 507). Ultimately, the reconfiguration of social order during the early years of communist rule gave the BCP virtually complete authority to dictate the content and terms under which Bulgarians produced, consumed, and publicly interpreted media.

Of course, this subject construction resulting in the "new" urban socialist citizen was neither homogeneous nor uniform in its adoption. The effect of the BCP's turn toward more stringent state regulation of occupations in both the economic and cultural realms had significant consequences for musicians who had started their careers during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Like their counterparts in other countries of the Eastern Bloc, musicians who played jazz had to carefully police their musical output and personal associations in the face of constant surveillance by authorities.[11] This is especially true in the wake of the formation of the Committee for Science, Art, and Culture, which was established in 1948 by Chervenkov to bring these potentially "bourgeois" parts of Bulgarian society into closer proximity to their perceived Soviet counterparts.

Socialist Realism and Jazz

Jazz's association with unbridled personal expression, irrational and "primitive" behavior, and "bourgeois" sensibilities meant that measures were taken to keep an eye on its production and consumption by Bulgarian citizens. As such, the music became one of the primary targets of Chervenkov's new committee, following the precedent of similar organizations in the Soviet Union active during the latter part of Stalin's rule. Many of the committee's major criticisms against jazz oscillated between concerns over African-esque "jungle beats" and capitalist "mechanized chaos". Both aspects were grounded as specifically and almost wholly American. The BCP's aesthetic critique of jazz via these

[11] Surveillance of bars, clubs, and other musical establishments associated with jazz and rock was exceedingly common through the Eastern Bloc during the 1950s, and there have been several studies that touch on this phenomenon in more detail. See Ryback 1990 for some general descriptions from across the communist Bloc countries. For more specific descriptions by country see Starr 1994 (Soviet Union), Brown 2007 (Hungary) and Taylor 2006 (Bulgaria).

two diverse and rather specific "stylistic" traits was well documented in an essay on musical aesthetics and capitalism written by one P. Dimitrov sometime in the late-1940s.

> Jazz, like everything in America, is a monopoly. They establish themselves factories for production of all kinds of screaming, rumbling, howling, and pounding instruments. They give arise to dozens of music publishers, who with furious competition pour over the world with their boulevard productions. The wild squawking, the furious rhythm, the slobbery sentimentalism, the pathological eroticism – this is the new content of jazz music….at home all these depravities are still continuing to exist, implanted smoothly from *Jazz Ovcharov*, whom emulate every smaller makeup of this type (quoted in Zhivkov 2001).

Dimitrov's widely divergent characterizations about jazz stemmed from the discourse about the music that was prevalent throughout Stalinist Russia. The source of these attitudes in the communist world can be traced to a famous essay on musical aesthetics by novelist Maxim Gorky in 1928 called "Music of the Gross," in which Gorky likened the consumption of jazz to gluttony. Gorky's essay was instrumental in defining the stance of socialist realism toward jazz and other forms of Western music in the Soviet Union until Stalin's death (Starr 2003). Dimitrov mirrors those concerns in his own essay, taking care to link the music with both the pounding, soulless drone of factory production and the "pathological eroticism" that was the inevitable consequence of jazz's affect. Most significantly he criticizes Asen Ovcharov's group for "smoothly implanting" the fruit of American capitalist production into Bulgaria's midst.

With the spread of the aesthetics of socialist realism came further retrenchments against jazz and other forms of Western expression. Another essay, written for the journal *Bŭlgarska Muzika* in 1953 toward the end of the Bulgaria's Stalinist period,

catalogues a particular incident involving professional musicians in Vidin and their decided lack of adherence to a sense of communist ethic.

> We arrive [in the city of Vidin] by steamer exactly on 9 September this year. In the Danube capital there reigns a festive, happy mood. The restaurant-garden in the city park is full of young people. Jazz is being played! We listen and cannot believe our ears. Amidst the sound of 'Boogie-woogie' and 'Rumba', stooped silhouettes of long-haired swingers are twisting. Among them healthy and robust young people from the masses attempt to imitate them. In the orchestra, a dozen musicians are smiling self-contentedly. We look more carefully and recognize one after another the leading Vidin symphonists. The 'symphonist' Slavkov, instead of a trombone, on which he plays not badly, has taken two hollow pumpkins and in 'artistic trance' tries to capture the foreign American rhythm of the rumba. The rest of the 'symphonists' chime in. Amidst the sounds of the cacophony, the city cultural leaders drink their wine with dignity. Nobody even thinks to protest against this musical barbarity…. (Guentcheva 2004, 228).[12]

Much like the excerpt from the Dimitrov essay, hyperbole abounds here, not to mention geographic abstractions of musical genres (casting the Cuban-based rumba as "American," for example). But it also emphasizes the idealized rhetoric of the hegemonic construction of socialist taste that the BCP desired to take root amongst the populous. If socialist aesthetics were immutable, then judgment was ultimately in the hands of the indoctrinated citizenry who diligently reported on those who were led astray by the allure of "bourgeois" objects and desires. The writer of this passage spares no one in his criticism, from Vidin's "cultural leaders" to the musicians to the "healthy and robust young people," all of whom could be leading productive, communist activities absent of the "musical barbarity" which "nobody even thinks to protest against." Of interest also is the implied disintegration of professionalism in the music, the author

[12] Rossitza Guentcheva quotes from Muzkor. 1953. "Vidinski neblagopoluchiia" (Vidin's failures), *Bulgarska muzika* 9: 44.

specifically noting that a fine symphony trombonist named Slavkov had degraded himself by casting aside his trained instrument in favor of two hollow pumpkins which he beats in an "artistic trance."

The tone of these two essays provides a barometer through which to judge the BCP's attitude toward "jazz" throughout the 1950s. In essence, everything associated with "jazz" from repertoire to recordings was scrutinized. Popular restaurants and clubs like the Hotel Bulgaria were closely watched by BCP operatives intent on publicly exposing deviations from the BCP's artistic ideal. Recording was difficult, and acquiring and disseminating foreign records was almost impossible to do legally. Many working musicians and singers were subject to constant harassment over repertoire, without any consensus on what was acceptable and what was not from city to city. Following the Soviet Union's lead, there was even a brief ban placed on the sale or ownership of saxophones in 1949 (Starr 1994).

The authoritative gaze that cast both the State and the average citizen as potential whistleblowers had great effect on the mindsets of musicians who often played in suspect locales. Vocalist Liana Antoneva, who would become one of the most popular and internationally famous jazz and pop singers of that era, wrote years later about how trying this time was for her as a working musician and in her personal life.

> The years that followed can without exaggeration be called "walking torture." My professional life was truly hell. As ever I was ambitious, practicing, and flexible. I couldn't work normally within the conditions of the *nomenklatura*, the regime in Bulgaria full of unwritten laws and prohibitions. It took an ordinance with which to be allowed (if generally you receive permission) to travel with my orchestra for only six months abroad. For the most noticeable proposals that I received, for example Las Vegas, Mexico, Johannesburg, and many others, I didn't give [the

> promoters] a response, but generally [the BCP]didn't answer yes or no, while the [concert] contract expired. In Bulgaria as well it was forbidden to sing in foreign languages. I had to translate my entire repertoire into Bulgarian, after which I was auditioned by countless committees, composed of totally incompetent people – they eventually decided which songs could be allowed for performance. They didn't approve of my clothes or manners and depicted me as a conduit of Western influence and personality, detrimental for the masses, especially for the youth.
>
> In this struggle for survival and crippled creativity there was no time for meetings with my spiritual friends. The circles stopped. My only consolation was the books that I had bought while I travelled around the Western world. The years that I am defining as "walking torture" were not periodic, but the entire era (Antoneva 1994, 56).

Antoneva's account of her early career elucidates many of the contradictions in the BCP's policies toward popular music under Chervenkov's government. Her framing mechanism of "walking torture" emphasizes the kind of existential anguish she felt in negotiating the complex array of social codes cast upon her music. Having to translate repertoire into Bulgarian and constantly adjust her attire, language, and demeanor clearly affected her personally. Nonetheless there were still opportunities for her to perform both in Bulgaria and abroad, provided she make necessary "adjustments" to her self-presentation.

The disjuncture between policies toward popular music during the early communist period and their interpretation and enforcement in everyday life not only affected musicians. Concert attendees, public service employees, writers, and other citizens were subjected to the unclear rules and contradictory enforcement regarding jazz under the Chervenkov government. Often, the conflicting interpretations on acceptability led to instances of legal trouble for unsuspecting Bulgarian citizens. One such incident was recounted by Hacho Boyadzhiev, a career official in the radio and television industries who served as director of Bulgarian National Television (BNT) from 1993-95.

In a collection of essays celebrating the 50th anniversary of Radio Varna---one of the regional subsidiaries of Bulgarian National Radio---Boyadzhiev told of an incident that occurred during his brigade service as an intern at Radio Varna during the summer of 1947.[13] The standard procedure for the station at the time was to switch from Radio Varna to the Radio Sofia feed at 7 PM every evening, which provided programming until 10:30 PM. On a Saturday evening, the sixteen-year old Boyadzhiev was manning the station with sound engineer and friend Borislav Piperkov. When the time came to transfer to the Radio Sofia broadcast, a malfunction with the relay transmitter in Veliko Turnovo meant that only static was coming through the feed. The musical director, a man named Tsvetanov, had left six large gramophone recordings of opera and symphonic works as a backup in case of technical problems, but these records could produce only an hour and a half of programming. Unable to contact either Tsvetanov or station director Yordan Karanov via telephone, Boyadzhiev came up with a plan. He knew that *Jazz Ovcharov*, featuring popular singer Leni Vŭlkova, was playing at the Astoria that night, one of the most popular nightclubs in Varna. With Ovcharov's permission, Boyadzhiev and Piperkov took some equipment from the station to the club and filled out the remaining hour of programming time with Vŭlkova's performance.

The following Monday, word came to the station that the Regional Committee of the Communist Party was displeased with the programmatic diversion. Their assessment

[13] Communist youth brigades based on the Yugoslav model became common in Bulgaria starting in 1948 as a way to involve young men and women from the village population in public works projects. In addition to building roads, dams, houses, and industrial complexes, brigadiers were educated in politics and economics and given rudimentary technical training in the operation and maintenance of machinery (Smollett 1989, 62). Youth brigades were eventually absorbed by the Bulgarian Communist Youth League, or *Komsomol* as the organization was popularly known, in the early-1950s.

was that a breakdown of ideological discipline at Radio Varna that had occurred in allowing a teenager to broadcast jazz on the airwaves of Bulgarian National Radio. A BCP member named Kovachev, who had just arrived at Radio Varna from the District Committee to head the station's news division and who Boyadzhiev barely knew, stood up for his actions to the representatives of the Regional Committee. "Well," Boyadzhiev recalls Kovachev stating, "wait for us to explain. What did you want from this boy? He clearly didn't have another choice. He looked for us to ask what to do, but he couldn't find us. Actually, he saved the program, but you – instead of praising him for the reaction – want to punish him" (Toncheva 2004).

Despite the best efforts of the BCP to problematize the "bourgeois" lifestyle, the reality was that even the most stringent application of Stalinist paradigms in everyday life failed to exorcise objects of Western origin. The primary cause of such failure was the lack of clear ideological definition of what constituted "bourgeois" and how the objects of such designation were to be consumed ethically. For all of the historical conceptualization of "Stalinism" as a monolithic political and social construction, there was a surprising amount of leeway with regard to individual interactions with government agencies. For example, one clear indication of this slippage with regard to individuals was the fact that Antoneva could obtain visas and passports for her band as a "Western pop orchestra," whether or not these were granted by the BCP. The same criterion applies to Boyadziev's story involving his time at Radio Varna. That Boyadzhiev's experienced what amounted to a minor slap on the wrist from the Regional

Committee likely had similar mitigating factors in addition to his colleague stepping in on Boyadzhiev's behalf.

Jazz was subject to the same kinds of slippage no matter how vilified in certain circles of the BCP. Professional and amateur dance bands were still very active during the early-to-mid 1950s in Sofia, Plovdiv, and on the Black Sea resorts.[14] However, the majority of these bands consisted almost entirely of younger musicians whose careers started after September 1944 and the rise of the communist state. Although musicians were still scrutinized for their dress and repertoire choices, the greatest ire from state aestheticians seemed to be directed at musicians whose careers were established prior to 1944. The explicit association with Bulgaria's bourgeois past made these musicians prime targets for the intense scrutiny of the State's aesthetic ears.

There were countless instances in the socialist everyday of slippage, ruptures, and outright rejections of the State's subjective ideal. Markov, for example, speaks of how the BCP ideologues who led reading groups of works by Marx, Lenin, and Stalin at a metallurgy factory he worked at in the early-1950s were openly mocked and ignored by participants (Markov 1984, 50-6). The selective recourse to imprisonment, re-education, and physical violence by the BCP during this time was in fact the last step in a series of conceptual strategies. The "carrot" eventually and definitively became the "stick."

The question becomes how can we conceptualize the essence of the "carrot," how the "carrot" leads to the "stick," and what this transition tells us about the production and

[14] See Gadzhev 2010, 137-79 for profiles of some other bandleaders working at that time, including Emil Georgiev, Stanimir Stanev, Angel Mihailov, and Nikola Yanev.

consumption of jazz in Bulgaria during the early communist period. While only tangentially related to the discussion about "jazz" in this chapter, and one in which I will later argue is necessary to understand the lack of tangible writings about jazz and *from* jazz musicians during this time. Self-reflexive writing (journal, travelogue, autobiography), was instrumental in the construction of an urban bourgeois subjectivity in Bulgaria during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. More broadly, these modes of writing were a way to place oneself within the array of signs in a modernizing, globalized experience, although it is debatable the level of coherence this writing brought to the subject as a form of being-in-the-world.[15] As I showed in Chapter 1, these self-reflexive forms of writing were also instrumental in conceptualizing Bulgaria's relationship with Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire both before and after the liberation. Under communism, self-reflexive writing took on an entirely new dimension that forced a reconceptualization in the ways Bulgarians articulated senses of self through expression.

SELF-REFLEXIVE WRITING UNDER COMMUNISM

The Soviet-influenced communist government in Bulgaria fundamentally altered the style and function of writing about the self, the construction of subjectivity, and the moral obligations of said subject with regard to state power. Consequentially, the entire configuration of the moral subject moved away from bourgeois cosmopolitanism toward a dependence on the state to define individual roles. In other words, the self was no

[15] A critique of the fallacious nature of autobiographical transparency within modernity is outlined by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Biographical Illusion*, where the formation of individuality is based on an amalgamation of fragmented actions into coherent sequences. For a brief comparison of Bourdieu and Michel de Certeau's notion of the biography as a discourse of power within the 19th century colonial project, see Erlmann 1999, 36.

longer constructed by the imagining of oneself outward into the world as in the height of the imperial project, but by the self-sustaining ideological interiority that there existed no ethical being outside of the BCP that covered the individual like a blanket.

The paradigmatic shift in self-reflexive writing under communism is first seen in the Soviet Union during the first half of the twentieth century. In the 1920s, autobiographies were a key component of subjective rebirth from members of the decadent petit bourgeois into productive and fervent ideologues. In writing about themselves, BCP applicants underwent a ritual of cleansing, literally shedding their bourgeois past and metamorphizing into a member of the ideologically-beholden communist elite. Or, as Igal Halfin describes:

> While conversion to Communism was certainly a natural event, it also had mythical overtones. Suffused with mystical symbolism, Communist conversion rituals underscored the boundary between the impure, petit-bourgeois society and the brotherhood of the elect. They sharply dramatized the discontinuity between the world the student was leaving and the world he was entering. Indeed, the rituals of Party admission may be counted among the classic rites of passage. When he enrolled in the Party, the student shed his individualistic self, died as a rank-and-file citizen, and was reborn as a member of the brotherhood of the elect (Halfin 2003, 52).

The allegory of rebirth is quite clear here. Describing the journey one takes from their old lives into their new identities as part of the BCP elite follows a vaguely Hegelian trajectory that centers on the "dichotomy of continuity and rupture" in the creation of the subject (ibid. 53). In order for an individual to be reborn as a member of the BCP, the ritual of confession was needed in order to cleanse the spirit of past sins. Ironic parallels in religious dogma aside, the purpose of creating these new selves was the shedding of desire as the primary mode of actualization within the individual. Individual desire was

replaced by the communalistic hegemony provided by the BCP – the only desire necessary is one that serves the ideology of the greater good for society as a whole

A later development in self-reflexive Soviet writing is the turn that such writing took under the thumb of the Stalinist purges of the 1930s. Perhaps following the everyday reality that any perceived vestiges of bourgeois thought or action could lead to imprisonment or death, the narratives of ideological rebirth that was a hallmark a decade earlier had been replaced by a self devoid of any sense of transcendence whatsoever. Writings about individuals had ceased to be self-reflexive in any way and had instead "completely internalized the perspective of the collective" within the individual (ibid 263). The subject of the Stalinist 1930s, in essence:

> was a utopian self, outside of time and space, a self fused in its entirety with the Bolshevik movement. Since the protagonist and the Party were inseparable, cause and affect were interchangeable. The autobiographer might speak as an extension of the Party…..The flattening of subjectivity so visible in….self-portrait resulted directly from the messianic assumption, prevailing during the Great Purge, that the gap between signifier and the signified had been completely erased. One was what one appeared, without residue or supplement. This simplified picture of the self was just one manifestation of the assumption, critical to Stalinist language, that 'ought' and 'is' were at long last identical. 'A unity of essence and appearance,' Party propagandists maintained, 'is one of the unique features of our times'…. (ibid. 267).

The key word in the passage is *flattening*, which implies a kind of two-dimensionality in the construction of the subject that was very desirable to policy makers. With no depth to the soul there was no place for secrets, no part of the subject that was beyond eyes of the State. More importantly, flatness was itself a kind of self-referentiality in that individual transparency was bared willingly as part of the communist ethical complex. Conversion served not only to bind the subject to the ideological apparatus, but in an Althusserian

turn makes the subject *itself* synonymous with ideology. Halfin articulates such a position when he refers to the "gap between signifier and signified" being "completely erased." Any notion of meaning pertaining to subject construction is no longer relevant because subjects do not construct themselves. In other words there can be no crisis of representation in such a subjectivity because there is no real notion of representation to begin with.[16]

The process that Halfin describes in the Soviet Union precipitated the turn against the enactment of bourgeois subjectivity from being considered selfish, into being considered *unethical*. There could be no true subject apart from the disciplining mechanisms of communist ideology and the life that that entailed. Submitting to the aesthetic tenets of socialist realism was not only in the best interests of Bulgarian society as a whole, but also in the best interests of the subject him or herself. As writer Nikolai Filov glumly notes, students of that time learned to write résumés the "socialist way," starting with "I come from a poor but progressive working-class family...." (Filov 2007).

The process of transition in self-reflective writing that, according to Halfin, took approximately two decades in the Soviet Union was far more condensed in Bulgaria because of many factors. For one, the dissolution of an active communist party in Bulgaria after the September Uprising in 1925 (referred to by John Bell as "In The Wilderness") drove many former members into the yoke of the Soviets, where they were absorbed into various bureaucracies and educated at institutions such as the Communist

[16] The marriage of subjectivity and ideology in late Althusser, Lenin, and others is naturally at odds with Marx's own conceptualization of the subject from his earlier works, as well as those based on autonomy theory as put forth by Antonio Negri in the 1970s. For a detailed critique of how this entire discourse plays out through late-60s and early-1970s Franco-Italian Marxism, see Ryan 1988.

University for the National Minorities of the West, which housed a Bulgarian section (Bell 1977, 42). Many of the communists who returned to Bulgaria during WWII to participate in partisan actions against the Germans were fully institutionalized within Stalinist-era communist practices. Many of these ideologues became the first generation of communist elites within the Fatherland Front, and later in the subsequent postwar communist governments. As Georgi Markov recollects, purges of the intelligentsia went into effect almost immediately, particularly affecting university students and faculty whose "bourgeois" attitudes were not to be tolerated.[17]

Though Halpin's work shows the ideological intent that the late-Stalinist Soviets had toward subject construction amongst the intelligentsia, the policing of those same aspects in Bulgarian writing between 1947 and 1953 was far less homogeneous. For example, Rossitza Guentcheva shows how rapidly the BCP shifted ideas about semantic interpretation by authors of life in the capitalist world in the production of the Bulgarian travelogue to the West. On one hand, her argument provides an important parallel to Halfin's account of autobiographical writing in the USSR, showing how rapidly the same ideological crafting of the self was adopted by the BCP. On the other hand, the same rapid adoption opened gaps in the policing and enforcement of that self, allowing for seemingly contradictory expressions of a coded "bourgeois" self. The account that Guentcheva constructs about self-reflexive writing shows how unsure writers and their

[17] "Echoes from My Student Years" catalogues Markov's experiences with the BCP's early interferences as a student at the Polytechnic University in Sofia in 1947-48, and paints a vivid yet nuanced picture of how students indoctrinated into the BCP turned on their colleagues and purged them from higher education by the hundreds. See Markov 1994, 3-18.

critics were in terms of what constituted a correct representation of the West through the eyes of the socialist self.

Rather than simply a subjective account of impressions and experiences intended to deeply embed readers within a space and time, the Bulgarian socialist travelogue almost immediately became a lens through which Western society could be seen "correctly." As such, the authorial view on life in Western countries was heavily mediated by the BCP prior to publication as to "protect" Bulgarians from "the subversive influence of alien thoughts and corrupt capitalist practices" (Guentcheva 2008, 356). Travelogues that were rejected outright or subjected to heavy revision before publication were those that focused on signs of material wealth and luxury (even if overtly critical of them), or failed to properly emphasize the struggle of the working class against the forces of capitalism. Some eschewed the role of class altogether as in Hristo Zaimov's *Swiss Sketches* (1949) while others overemphasized the role of organized religion (Konstantin Katsarov's *The World Up Close*). Guentcheva argues that the BCP seemed most accepting of works in which writers relied on "their ability to witness certain phenomena directly...[and] to pinpoint 'truth' and to differentiate it from an apparent reality" (ibid. 376-77). The ability to pinpoint such truth in Western culture and lifestyle came not from the subject's own innate rational judgement, but from the ideological tenets of a Marxist education. Party self-discipline and crafting enabled the socialist interlocutor to uncover the invisible working-class suffering obscured by capitalism's mechanisation of everyday life.

Jazz and Subject Construction in Early Communism

In order to construct this new vision of a Bulgarian self, it was necessary for writers to formulate codes and signs that were constantly shifting in meaning under the umbrella of communist aesthetics. Writers found the most leeway in self-policing their output in order to best fall into the BCP's aesthetic line. The situation was no different for Bulgarian musicians, although they were scrutinized according to the kind of music they produced. The administrators, conductors, arrangers, and folklorists attached to the folk orchestra of Philip Koutev and the Ensemble for Folk Songs at Bulgarian Radio and Television, both established in 1952, were entrusted with modernizing Bulgaria's folk repertoire as a way to promote a people's culture in the idealised tradition of *bitov*, or "kernel" (Buchanan 2006, 140-45). Jazz orchestras, embodying Western bourgeois traits in their instrumentation and repertoire, were not afforded the luxury of such creative freedom by the BCP. Surveillance and scrutiny were almost guaranteed for all of the bands working during that time, and as was shown in the case of Ovcharov and Georgiev, even attempts to integrate within the codes of acceptable behaviour did not guarantee success.

An illustration of state surveillance of jazz musicians is evident in a photograph taken in 1955. It shows a performance by the dance band attached to the Technical University of Sofia (*Politekhnikata*), established after WWII to train engineers and other technical specialists. Although not clear in the picture, the performance appears to be taking place on the main stage at Bulgaria Hall (*zala Bŭlgariya*) in central Sofia, current home of the Sofia Philharmonic and one of the most prestigious performance sites in

communist Bulgaria. It is not mentioned what the roughly thirteen-piece band is playing. There are three large photographs over their heads, mounted on the stage's back wall. One is of Vŭlko Chervenkov, still First Secretary of the Communist Party. The second is of Georgi Dimitrov. The third, largest and between the first two, is of the already-deceased Josef Stalin. A banner sitting below the mounted photographs reads "Amateur Art is a powerful tool for the communist education of the youth" (*Hudozhestvenata samodeinost e moshto srestvo za komunistichesko vŭzpitanie na mladite*).

The affect perpetuated by the picture is unmistakable – "We are watching you." A line in the sand was clearly drawn for musicians who engaged with jazz during the early-1950s. The question for musicians, as with all of the artistic intelligentsia, became what would happen when that line was crossed. Stakes were raised after a symbolic severing with the West at large occurred in February of 1950, when Chervenkov refused to refute a claim made during the trial of Traicho Kostov the year before that the American Ambassador had engaged in espionage.[18] In response, the Truman administration cut off diplomatic relations, and the United States was subsequently cast by the BCP as "the seat of all evil" (Bell 1986, 109). Bulgaria was firmly within the Stalinist camp and the worst repressions against the artistic intelligentsia began in earnest.

[18] Traicho Kostov (1897-1949) was one of the most famous of the Bulgarian-raised communists, as opposed to Chervenkov and others who lived and trained in the Soviet Union while in exile. He helped direct the wartime underground and rose through the ranks of the Fatherland Front to a position of high authority in the BCP after the war. Often at odds with the Stalinist BCP members, he was sacked in as Deputy Premier 1949 and tried as a Titoist spy. He was convicted and executed mostly based on a forced confession, which he later repudiated.

BULGARIA IN THE 1950S: CREATING THE "NERVOUS SYSTEM" OF COMMUNIST LIFE

The scope of the physical and mental dangers that accompanied bourgeois self-reflexive expression and self-imagining of any kind can perhaps be best emphasized by the fate of Georgi Markov, the famous dissident writer and exile who was one of the finest satirical playwrights and novelists in Bulgaria during the 1960s. His memoirs also serve as one of the best windows into the Bulgarian communist elites (*nomenklatura*) available to Western readers, as so few with his level of access to the higher echelons of the BCP had either the skill, the wherewithal, or the opportunity to write such a book. After immigrating to Great Britain in 1969, Markov came under the employ of the BBC World News service as an expert on Eastern Europe. He subsequently recorded 14 broadcasts for Radio Free Europe about the communist elite in Bulgaria, most notably his personal interactions with Prime Minister Todor Zhivkov during Markov's membership in the Bulgarian Writer's Union during the 1960s. The reaction from both the BCP and the Kremlin was predictably furious, and countless death threats were leveled against Markov from afar. These culminated in his mysterious death in 1978 when he was lightly poked on Waterloo Bridge in London by an umbrella that injected the poison ricin into his bloodstream. Although Scotland Yard was initially baffled by the death, Markov suspected poison while on his deathbed a hypothesis later confirmed by Bulgarian defectors who detailed Soviet-sanctioned assassination plots against dissident émigrés living in the West.[19]

[19] For years, the details of who officially ordered the Markov assassination had been a mystery since several government files regarding the incident were mysteriously burned by a member of the military after

Markov was eliminated due to his intimate knowledge of Zhivkov's personal demeanor and opinions about the Soviets, both of which were well hidden from the public during the length of his reign. There were others who endured assassination attempts and kidnappings for similar reasons. A story written by David Gage and published in the *New York Times* in 1983 catalogues the testimony of three former members of the State Security (*Dŭrzhavna Sigŭrnost*, or DS) who, upon defecting in the early 1980s, revealed a tightly organized, Soviet-driven policy to monitor exiles abroad and take and "appropriate" measures should the émigrés' actions prove inconvenient toward Bulgaria's interests.[20] The article mentions Boris Arsov, a dissident intellectual who was kidnapped from his home in Denmark after publishing a criticism of the Bulgarian government in 1974 and reappeared in Sofia after two months to stand trial. He was found guilty and died in prison under mysterious circumstances the next year, ruled a suicide by the authorities. Another was Vladimir Kostov, the former deputy president of the committee overseeing radio and television standards in Bulgaria before defecting to Paris in 1977, where like Markov he began broadcasting for Radio Free Europe. In August of 1978 he felt a pain in his back while leaving the Paris Metro, and lapsed into a fever for several days. He survived, and upon hearing of Markov's death

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the fall of the communist government in 1989. A 2005 article published in *The London Times* reveals that Markov's killer was a man named Francesco Guillino, a Dane of Italian origin who was recruited as an agent by the *DS* in 1970. His orders were directly given to him from then deputy interior minister General Stoyan Savov, facts that were gleaned of six years of investigative research in Bulgaria by journalist Hristo Hristov (Hamilton and Walker 2005).

[20] The *Dŭrzhavna Sigŭrnost* was short for Committee for State Security (*Komitet za dŭrzhavna sigŭrnost*), Bulgaria's version of the Soviet KGB until the fall of the communist state 1989.

some two weeks later, had his back x-rayed, where a platinum pellet similar to the one found in Markov's leg was found.

The incidents involving Markov, Arsov, and Kostov occur some 25 years after the worst of the Stalinist-style repressions in Bulgaria, long after Nikolov, Ovcharov, and other first-generation jazz musicians had died. And yet, these assassination attempts against high profile members of the Bulgarian intelligentsia *living abroad*, give us a clear idea of the stakes involved in constructing any kind of self-narratives breaking from the code of ethics the communist subject was obliged to live by. That self-reflexive writing, one of the literary tenets of the modern subject, could undergo such a vast transformation in the communist world gives us an example of how other forms of self-reflective expression, as jazz was associated with, could be subject to the same kinds of wholesale alterations.

More importantly, this analysis gives us a better reflection on silences and fragmented details about the lives of these musicians during the first years of the communist era. The only way to guarantee survival was to keep as low a profile as possible, and even in those cases nothing could be guaranteed. Ovcharov's attempt to create ideologically-palatable music (his "jazz" version of "Internationale") ended in failure because of his fame and symbolic connections with the old bourgeois social order. Antoneva, Ivanova, and (for a time) Sasho Sladura maintained their careers by constantly reshaping their repertoire, their dress, their speech, and their very selves in dealing with the BCP. The experience of everyday life for the artistic intelligentsia became increasingly "nervous," what Walter Benjamin referred to as a perpetual "state of

emergency" (Taussig 1992). Social codes of acceptability in such a "nervous system" were increasingly unstable and unpredictable, leaving those at the margins of acceptable expression within communist aesthetics with little real idea of where one stood from one day to the next. The specter of arrest, imprisonment, and even death was always present, and years of carefully cultivating oneself could be undone in a single gesture. Playing or being associated with jazz at that time was a very nervous proposition, considering the strong associations with the West, and the idea that repertoire and concerts were under constant surveillance heightened the level of self-policing on an everyday basis. The snapshot of Antoneva's singing career during this era perfectly captures not only the discipline necessary to maintain a performance career, but the constant sense of frustration in dealing with BCP ideologues. At best, opportunities for concerts and tours abroad would slip through the artists' fingers as passports and visas were delayed or never issued. At worst, artists could be sent to *kontslagera*, as was the case for Ovcharov, Ivanova, and others.

Sasho Sladura's role as an allegory for an entire generation of repressed culture makers was precisely because he embodied the very kind of bourgeoisness that communist ideology sought to undermine. Yet he outlasted many of his contemporaries whilst prodding the BCP for years through his veiled criticisms and jokes. His level of outspokenness during the 1950s became almost legendary, enacted through what Todor Todorov has referred to as "French finesse" (*frenski fines*) (Todorov 2002). *Frenski fines* was part of a complex of signifiers and slang amongst youth culture known colloquially as "swingers" (*zozi* or *swingeri*), or by the Soviet designation of *stilyagi* (Taylor 2006,

Yurchak 2006). His popularity with both older and younger audiences was unique, and he was most skillfully able to manipulate the unstable codes of conduct that constituted the "nervous system" of Bulgarian urban life better than anyone. Friend and contemporary Todor Balchev, for example, recalled that Sasho openly referred to the BCP's press outlet "Worker's Case" (*Rabotnichesko Delo*) as "a newspaper without an opinion" (Potv 2009), and yet he maintained a great deal of popularity amongst the communist elite despite his demeanor. Vŭlko Chervenkov, toward the latter part of his reign, was particularly fond of Sladura, and the First Secretary often had Sasho stay after official gatherings to drink and entertain with his jokes and puns into the night.

The height of Sladura's popularity coincided with the first vestiges of Bulgarian de-Stalinization when Chervenkov gave up his post as General Secretary of the BCP at the Sixth Congress in 1954 (Bell 1986, 113). Following the lead of the Soviet Union, the Congress preempted a reexamination of the aesthetic tenets of socialist realism at the highest levels of the BCP. Notable examples of this "thaw" in the arts included Chervenkov's defense of the controversial Dimitŭr Dimov novel "Tobacco" (*Tyutyun*), a new "anti-dogmatic" approach to the evaluation of literature headed by the Union of Bulgarian Writers, and the restoration of the works of many historically "bourgeois" writers to the Bulgarian literary canon (ibid. 114).

Jazz orchestras also took advantage of the "thaw," intensifying their efforts to incorporate a broader range of repertoire past censors. *Jazz of the Youth*, for example, relied on trumpeter Ivaylo Peichev to transcribe and arranged pieces from Czech composers influenced by Western pop music. The band also frequently renamed pieces

with Bulgarian titles, a practice perfected in other parts of the Eastern Bloc in the late-1940s. On a few occasions, the group even changed the surnames of American composers to sound Spanish or Latin American. *Jazz of the Optimists* utilized relaxed travel restrictions in 1955 to conduct their first international tour, performing in Romania, Hungary, Poland, East Germany, and Finland. Vocalist like Lea Ivanova and Liana Antonova began to establish international careers, and younger singers like Snezhka Dobreva and Ahinova Kŭmanova found their way into the film industry – Dobreva in Austria as "Gina Dobra" and Kŭmanov in Germany as "Nora Nova" (Gadzhev 2010, 151-52).

The thaw was brief, however. In the wake of the 1956 autumn uprising in Hungary that was brutally crushed by the Soviets,[21] the BCP again began to repress dissent and open forms of expression not in harmony with socialist ideals. Unlike the first purges of the intelligentsia in 1949-50, Sladura was this time subject to considerable harassment from the authorities, possibly because of the diminishing influence of his political ally Chervenkov in BCP affairs by the mid-1950s. His first publicized arrest was in 1957, on the charge of ideological subversion and spreading vicious jokes. Released after one year of imprisonment, Sladura continued his career unabated, playing frequently with *Jazz of the Optimists* at the Hotel Bulgaria and the Sofia Astoria. He continued to act and speak in the same fashion as before, despite the fact that Todor Zhivkov seemed less enamored with his jokes and criticisms.

[21] The Hungarian Uprising and the artistic intelligentsia's role in that conflict with the Soviet Union had a profound effect on the BCP's strategy toward unionized writers, artists, and musicians during the 1960s. For historical context on the Hungarian Uprising, see Barber 1974 and Lendvai 2008. For a timeline of events pertinent events leading up to Soviet military intervention, see Békés, Byrne, and Rainer 2002.

Sladura's exact movements and the political reaction to his comments at the time of his last arrest in 1961 are unclear. Some have suggested that his continued barbs against the BCP wore thin, and that the "decision" to eliminate him came as early as 1958. There is no clear reason as to why he was finally arrested in 1961. I found, in fact, conflicting reports regarding the nature of his arrest, as was the case with former employer and contemporary Asen Ovcharov. One version states that one evening, during a gathering near *Tsveta Nedelya* church in Sofia, Sladura was making openly critical remarks to a small group about some aspect of public policy. What he said exactly is unclear, but his statements drew the attention of a nearby police officer who informed him that he risked arrest if he continued. Minutes later, Sladura was escorted into the back of a black sedan and was never seen in public again (Bikova 2002).

The motive for Sladura's arrest may not have been from that particular incident, however, and could ultimately be attributed to an incident that took place some days or weeks before the arrest. Emanuil Doinov, a master harmonica player and friend of Sladura now residing in Las Vegas, told a story for an interview that after a concert in 1961, he and Sladura found themselves at a banquet with a number of other musicians, *nomenklatura*, and Zhivkov. Well after midnight, no doubt after quite a bit of food and alcohol, Zhivkov apparently asked Sladura, "Hey Sasho, when are you going?" To which he wittily replied "We are after a bit, but when will *you* go, comrade Zhivkov?" (emphasis mine) (Tenev 2010). Despite all of his fame and popularity, a joke hinting at the abdication from power by Zhivkov directly to the First Secretary's face was a bridge too far. There remains no direct evidence linking the incident with the arrest near *Sveta*

Nedelya. Given his reputation for speaking ill of the regime (he was once accused of saying over 100 political jokes about Vŭlko Chervenkov), and his missing arrest records, we will likely never know for certain if his quip toward Zhivkov ultimately spelled his doom.

Sladura's tragic last days in Lovech, culminating with his death on September 15th, 1961, are not nearly as mysterious as the terms of his arrest. Nikolas Dafinov, who was a prisoner at the camp at that time, recalled Sasho first being brought to the camp.

> After being given some new rags, the new arrival was assigned to flatten the ground of the *esplande* with a heavy roller. The brigade chief Andrey walked behind him, periodically hitting him with his heavy club. The man with the roller would twist and try to run. Several brigade leaders took turns at this task….while the poor fellow struggled and slaved away. We cast furtive looks toward the esplande and exchanged a few words. Some of the older Sofians identified the man as Sasha 'Dearheart,' the famous violinist who played at the restaurant in the Bulgaria Hotel. Sasha Nikolov (his real name) had brought along his violin: clearly, he didn't know where he was being sent. At the evening inspection, some fifteen torturers had a field day. One after the other, they hammered away at the musician as if there were in a relay race. They were absolutely beside themselves. What was the explanation? What had this man done?

Dafinov continues:

> We were herded back to the barracks. Those who knew Sasha helped him into bed. Astonishingly, he managed to smile. At a certain point, he leaned up against a pole and asked to be given his violin. He played a bit, enough to remind us of the outside world. Enough to bring tears to our eyes. He then fell asleep, or perhaps lost consciousness – I cannot say.
>
> At breakfast the following morning, it was whispered that the musician was "in the sack." It seemed he had carried his fate with him in the form of an envelope sealed with red wax. The obedient dogs had followed the enclosed orders. Who killed him? The first one who struck him? Or the last one? Or the ones in the middle? Or the unknown officials who had sent the order? Let us hope that the truth will come to light one day (Todorov 1999, 83-4).

The Lovech *kontslagera* where Sladura died was called "Sunny Beach" (*Slŭnche Bryag*), a name that was adopted with cruel irony by the camp organizers after a popular tourist spot on the Black Sea between Varna and Burgas. He was likely one of the last musicians to fall victim to the camp, as "Sunny Beach" was closed in early 1962 on the heels of a new moderation in Warsaw Pact-NATO relations that followed the nuclear scare of the Cuban Missile Crisis, as well as another wave of social and cultural de-Stalinization in countries throughout the Eastern Bloc.

DEATH, SUBJECTIVITY, AND SASHO'S STATUE

In remembering Sasho Sladura through the commissioning of the statue, his surviving colleagues enacted an imagined past in which bourgeois thought and expression ran unfettered through Sofia's streets, only to be squashed the moment Soviet tanks crossed the Danube in September 1944. The historical intertwinement between the development of jazz musicians in Bulgaria and the interwar urban bourgeoisie that made such development possible. Here lies an encapsulation of memory and desire inherent in the historical imagination of the subject amongst certain post-communist elites. At issue here is a dialectical fascination with a lost bourgeois past that greatly affects the legacy of jazz musicians from the early communist period.

Jazz and jazz musicians were important to this imagination as the embodiment of a Western modernity and an essential part of an everyday urban leisure integral to the growth of Sofia as a *European* city during the interwar period. Their presence in early-communist Bulgaria became what Marilyn Ivy terms a "vanishing" – a presence that

points to "the movement of something passing away, gone but not quite" (Ivy 1995, 20). The presence of jazz under the thumb of socialist realism was constant, and in some instances accepted by the government as part of urban life provided musicians didn't overstep aesthetic lines of "bourgeoisness" set out by BCP doctrine. Musicians played many of the same venues as before the war, and occasionally traveled abroad for concerts and tours. They played much the same repertoire, albeit with lyrics translated into Bulgarian or Russian. But the body of meanings that constituted their expressive culture was constantly at odds with the communist construction of the subject as part of the State apparatus. The acts of constant police surveillance, checking and rechecking repertoire lists, filling out endless visa and passport forms undermined much of what *playing* and *listening* to jazz had tapped into during the interwar period – the desire and becoming of a truly European urban bourgeoisie. The process of "becoming" bourgeois that encapsulated the practices and ideals of Bulgarian urban elites during the first half of the twentieth century was already vanishing post-WWII, even as the objects and styles that defined such a process were slowly being appropriated by the communist milieu.

The vanishing of the enactment of bourgeoisness in everyday life, via state violence, is strongly put in another section of the Nikolai Florov essay referenced earlier in the chapter. Writing from the present day, Florov engages with a visceral set of images that idealizes the experience of interwar bourgeois Sofia and the music that young people experienced in the city center's clubs and restaurants. The subsequent liquidation of that scene by the communist police is framed as a cold, brutal loss of body, self, and life.

> Sweet spring night. Rakovski is full of people, young people. Along its length there are various bars and clubs there. Rakovski is a kind of postwar *gezmeto*. There are many places to hear the jazz of Glenn Miller or Benny Goodman. After confused and dark years of war Sofian residents, especially young people have the feeling that to them opens a new life. America and England are examples to follow. They are allies of Stalin, so the future looks pink. Fashion is "narrow jazz pants, raincoat yellow as lemon", as in the song. Boogie Woogie and swing dancing are the gods.
>
> But here in this moment on Rakovski…. and Slaveikov[22] suddenly plunge trucks and vans filled with militiamen, a few in front of each restaurant. They stow inside and expel literally everyone. Under the express order of Comrade Chervenkov - no forgiveness for anyone. All captured are given free and unlimited travel to the NPP or Chirpan and many of them will not return. Court you? What kind of crap! All fall under the category "zozi and swing, anti-social, reactionary and hostile elements from contaminated decadent Western influence, bourgeois scum."
>
> In the raid, many boys and daughters of "comrades" who ran in panic to save their children. Chervenkov does not forgive, is not particularly of small fish. He is in love with Stalin, Stalin is God (Florov 2010).

What Florov articulates is the literal disassembling by the BCP of the kinds of scenes that Dragan Tenev describes in his memoir about Sofia in the 1930s (see Chapter 1). The restaurants and clubs that were filled with patrons enacting a cosmopolitan everyday are cleared, their occupants herded into trucks and sent to camps en masse. "Many will not return" predicts the eventual physical death of these patrons, but the image of lifeless restaurants and clubs is as important for describing the substantial alteration in the heart of urban cultural life under communist rule.

The Plath quote "dying is an art, like anything else" that frames the chapter's introduction emphasizes the idea that death and dying play as much a role in the aestheticization of subjectivity as living. In the imagination about death amongst those

[22] Florov refers to Georgi Rakovski boulevard (also known colloquially as Rakovska) and Slaveikov Square (*ploshtad* Slaveikov), two of the most prominent locales in the center of Sofia.

who reference Sladura in present-day Bulgaria lies different ways in conceptualizing history, loss, and a vanished and irrecoverable everyday in which a Bulgarian urban bourgeoisie thrived. Sasho Sladura's statue becomes a Benjaminian "dialectal image," referencing Sladura the living/dying subject, and Sladura the historical allegory. In other words, Sasho's physical death was metaphorically the final act of a cosmopolitan subject in a state that marginalized, terrorized, and reconceptualized such people. Though formerly "bourgeois" subjects could live under communist rule and engage in fairly regular and mundane everyday lives, the collective desire for a Bulgarian bourgeois modernity on par with those perceived throughout the rest of Europe was dead. Replacing bourgeois life was a simulacral modernity, one that incorporated all of the veneer of the West through the communist apparatus, but without substance or meaning. Something that would become clear to many artists, musicians, and writers in the 1960s, and will be discussed at length in the next chapter, is that the center of the Bulgarian bourgeois subject had to form via objects and discourses from outside – books and films in English, German, and French, or Willis Conover's Voice of America broadcasts. Even amongst the generation that came of age immediately after WWII, those that survived the *kontslagera* had by the 1970s based their careers in places like Las Vegas, Stockholm, Reyjavik, and London as opposed to Sofia.

So what can the doubly-inscripted embodiment in Sasho Sladura's statue tell us about the diffuse nature of subjectivity and artistic expression in 1950s Bulgaria? In one way, it alludes to a nostalgia amongst the intelligentsia-in-exile for the loss of their place as urban culture makers and consumers. More important, though, is the aestheticization

of that perceived loss. Michael Taussig notes that gravestones (and monuments) "exist to ensure at least the appearance of a direct bond between name and body, and on this our very language rests as well, tying words to their meanings as if they were directly bound, one to another, a form of magic" (Taussig 2006, 21). This direct bond that Taussig speaks of is also allegorical in the way it names an act of forgetting, or in the case of this monument puts a *face* on the act of forgetting. Dying tragically in "Sunny Beach" imbued Sladura's visage with the magic in remembering those times for those that lived through them, and erecting the statue during the bourgeois flowering of the post-communist period historicizes the entire notion of "becoming" bourgeois.

CONCLUSION

In his most apropos joke, Sladura responded to the socialist autobiographical mantra of "I come from a poor but progressive working-class family...." by claiming that *his* autobiography started with the phrase "I come from a *wealthy* but progressive family" (Florov 2010). Sladura's claim of coming from a "wealthy, progressive family" emphasized that bourgeois self-expression in early communist Bulgaria was not extinguished, particularly amongst youth whose imagination about America and American life was growing in the 1950s and 1960s. But that same expression was simultaneously fugitive in the eyes of the state, and the communist party had a vested interest in attempting to build ethical and disciplinary barriers toward Western bourgeoisness. Self-reflexive writing was one aesthetic form of subjective expression that came under attack throughout the communist world. Playing jazz was another

activity attacked as bourgeois, as evident in the writings about music stemming from the aesthetics of socialist realism and the number of musicians arrested for "bourgeois" crimes in the late-1940s and early-1950s.

But such overt suppression was rapidly coming to a close with the onset of the next decade. By the early-1960s, it was clear that objects of bourgeois coding were remaining in Bulgaria, and no amount of terror from the state could force them from the hearts and minds of the young. Confiscating radios and books and jamming external broadcasts was a far cry from attempting to instill an ideological and ethical distaste for the West amongst the populace, as was common in the 1950s. Thus, in the first half of the new decade, the BCP shifted their tactics in dealing with foreign popular art forms. An era of comparative openness in the arts ensued, in which the interest in jazz amongst the Bulgarian populace, musicians, and the communist government became more pronounced. The eventual reaction of the BCP had profound effects on the careers of Bulgarian musicians, and the state of jazz generally in Bulgaria, for the following twenty-five years.

Chapter 3: "Far Beyond Expectations": Jazz, State Ensembles, and the Communist "Thaw" during the 1960s

A headline, buried rather unceremoniously on page 12 of the July 15, 1967 issue of *Billboard* Magazine reads "Montreaux Jazz Fest Exceeds 'Far Beyond Expectations.'"

By all accounts the inaugural festival was on the shores of Lake Geneva in Switzerland resounding success, garnering comparisons to the prestigious Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island. Over the course of two days, twelve bands from all over Europe competed for a handful of prizes given out by the selection committee and the critics covering the event. At the end of the second day, the three-man jury of the selection committee chose the Bavarian Radio Jazz Ensemble (BJRE) for the award of outstanding group. American saxophonist Don Menza, one of the BRJE's most prominent members, was chosen as the outstanding soloist.

The twenty critics from various newspapers and magazines in attendance differed in opinion from the jury. Their prize, independent of the selection committee's, was awarded to a group of relative unknowns in many European jazz circles. Having made their international debut at a festival in Munich in 1965, travel restrictions and other projects had interfered with making frequent appearances throughout Europe over the following two years. After June 18th, the group called *Jazz Focus '65* (*Dzhaz Fokus 65*) became far more visible amongst European jazz aficionados.[1] The Bulgarian quartet,

[1] *Jazz Focus 65* was the band that most consider to be the first "modern" postwar jazz group in Bulgaria, and perhaps the most internationally famous Bulgarian jazz group to this day. The group was formed in 1965 to provide incidental music to a series of short films entitled "Focus" (*Fokus*), but soon established itself as an independent ensemble. Many of the compositional experiments that Leviev started with the

consisting of pianist Milcho Leviev, flutist Simeon Shterev, bassist Lyubomir Mitrov, and drummer Petŭr Slavov, entranced the crowd with a wide variety of jazz standards and original compositions. *Jazz Focus 65's* popularity was recognized by the writer of the *Billboard* piece, who noted that the choice for the critics' award was far more popular with the festival audience than the BRJE. "Nobody," states the author "denied the virtuosity and precision of the eight-man group from Germany, but their slick professionalism seemed less appealing to the Montreaux public than the intensity and originality of the Bulgarians" (*Billboard* 1967, 12).

This chapter explores the practice of jazz within the construction of communist musical aesthetics and discourses on "bourgeois" influence during the 1960s and early-1970s, when the relationships of Bulgarian musicians and the BCP to jazz that defined much of the remainder of the communist era were developed. Ideas about the place of Western forms of expression in Bulgarian social life were key to the establishment of these relationships regarding jazz, and these ideas were promulgated by Prime Minister and First Secretary Todor Zhivkov. Several institutions developed by the BCP during the 1960s to temper and shape the influence of Western popular music had the effect of creating spaces of creativity for professional musicians that allowed them to craft the first confluences between Bulgarian folk culture and jazz. The state ensembles that developed

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EOBRT in the early-1960s became integral to this ensemble. Also influential was writer Radoj Ralin, a friend of Leviev's who inspired the group's open dialogues with modal textures and avant-garde techniques revolutionary for Bulgarian groups at that time. The band toured actively until 1970, when Leviev's defection to West Germany and Shterev's formation of his own ensemble halted the project. *Jazz Focus 65*'s output is catalogued on three recordings released during the 1960s. The first two were on Balkanton: a live recording of their 1967 concert at Bulgaria Hall (*zala Bŭlgariya*) (BTA 1006), and a 1968 studio release entitled *Jazz Focus '65* (BTA 1098). The ensemble also recorded at Tonstudio Walldorf in West Germany on July 9th, 1968. It was released as *Jazz Focus '65* by MPS Records (MPS 15219) in 1969.

through these institutions, I argue, were simultaneously an attempt to undermine the aesthetic program of the BCP from within, yet also a subtle reinforcement of those same ideals to create an ethically socialist Bulgarian popular music. The inherent duality of such ensembles within the state-sponsored apparatus of professional music during this era became one of the defining attributes of jazz production during this period, and in some ways perpetuated until the 1980s.

In order to frame the social and political spheres surrounding jazz production during the 1960s, I borrow two terms coined by Russian cultural theorist Alexei Yurchak in his analysis of everyday life in the post-Stalinst Soviet Union. One, the "Imaginary West," concerns the complex desires for Western ideas and objects amongst citizens in the Eastern Bloc, as well as the BCP's various reactions to such desires. The other, called "outside" (*vnye*), emphasizes a conceptual space constructed by socialist citizens in which they lived and worked under the ideological codes of communism, but refuted the influence of those codes in the construction of self. *Vnye* was considered a lifestyle that consisted of living *in*, but not being *of* the system, and most importantly utilizing the gaps in those codes to personal advantage (Yurchak 2006).

In Bulgaria, these two concepts were integral to a web of strategies that delineated subject formation for both musicians and non-musicians during this period. After discussing the broader context under state socialism for these strategies, I focus on how these strategies were employed through the *Pop Orchestra of Bulgarian Radio and Television* (*Estraden Orkestŭr na Bŭlgarskoto Radio i Televiziya*, henceforth referred to as the EOBRT). EOBRT was the top ensemble in the state-sponsored Bulgarian pop and

jazz industry of the 1960s, and was thus tasked with the reintegration of such music for consumption by the socialist citizen. Milcho Leviev and EOBRT's other directors utilized the BCP'S discourse toward "jazz" and folk music (*narodna muzika*) to create the earliest examples of what became known as "ethno-jazz" (*etnodzhaz*), a style that matured starting in the early-1980s.

The success of the EOBRT created opportunities for other groups to carve out their own successes. However, the BCP's reaction to the events of Prague Spring undermined this progress, forcing many musicians to make the choice between staying or leaving. What eventually resulted in the early-1970s was a different, quintessentially communist kind of *blasé*, where the institutionalization of jazz within the communist system left musicians working within the system to function more like bureaucrats than artists. This relationship between musician and state dictated much of the jazz production throughout late-socialism, and the social relations have perpetuated to this day, becoming the seeds for the complex of post-communist boredom that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

TODOR ZHIVKOV, YOUTH CULTURE, AND "DEVELOPED" SOCIALISM

The details of Todor Zhivkov's rise to power in the BCP throughout the 1950s provide an essential perspective on the transition from Stalinist socialist realism toward a more pragmatic, libratory aesthetic philosophy in the 1960s. In 1954 Vŭlko Chervenkov, staunch Stalinist and successor to BCP hero Georgi Dimitrov gave up the position of General Secretary of the BCP in order to serve exclusively as Prime Minister. His

replacement for the reorganized position of First Secretary was a matter of considerable debate. Passing over other BCP elites with more experience and stronger backgrounds, the Central Committee settled on forty-two year old Todor Zhivkov, then head of the organizational department of the BCP. As a compromise choice for the position, he almost certainly did not strike the upper echelons of the BCP as a man to be reckoned with. Little did Zhivkov's contemporaries know that he was to have unrivaled influence on social, political and cultural life in Bulgaria over the next thirty-five years.[2]

In 1956, following Nikita Khrushchev's now famous denunciation of Stalin's cult of personality at the 20th Congress of the KPSS (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), Zhivkov consolidated his position as First Secretary by denouncing Chervenkov's own personality cult and embracing the more lenient anti-Stalinist positions of Khrushchev's government. The "April Plenum" saw Chervenkov step down as Prime Minister, and replaced by Zhivkov's fellow anti-Stalinist Anton Yugov. Through the rest of the 1950s, Zhivkov slowly consolidated his power through the promotion of social programs such as

[2] Born in the Shop village of Pravets in 1911, Zhivkov was the son of an impoverished clothier. He attended high school (*gimnasiya*) in the town of Orhanie, and was influenced by the area's political history as a center of Leftist dissent before the "White Terror" of 1925. Embracing the political radicalism of his school, he left for Sofia in 1929, and soon after became a member of the illegal youth front organization of the BCP – *Komsomol*. He climbed through the ranks of the underground Party throughout the 1930s, often clashing with the police and government authorities in his activities. His prewar influence in the BCP culminated with his appointment as secretary of the 3rd Sofia District Committee of the BCP, a position he held through the early years of Second World War (Krause 2007, 360). After going underground to avoid arrest and deportation in 1943, he became representative of the anti-Nazi partisan unit known as *Chavdar*, with whom he saw action throughout the summer of 1944. After the September coup of the "Fatherland Front" (*Otechestven Front*) that toppled the regency, Zhivkov served as head of the "People's Militia" (*Narodna Militatsiya*) in Sofia, and by 1948 moved up to secretary of the Sofia City Committee. This was his first foray into the inner circle of power in the BCP, and he took full advantage of the opportunity through his unique blend of intelligence and ambition. After the Kostov trial and the 1949-50 purges, Zhivkov worked his way into Chervenkov's trust and subsequently became a member of both the Central Committee and the Politburo. He utilized this trust become Chervenkov's *de facto* second-in-command during the early-1950s, and placed himself in prime position to take over as First Secretary in 1954.

the "April Line," (*April liniya*) at the 7th BCP Congress in 1958, an attempt to emulate the industrial and agricultural production of Maoist China.

Throughout 1961 and 1962, Zhivkov further cemented his control over the political and social apparatuses of the BCP. Shortly after celebrating his 50th birthday in 1961, Chervenkov was removed from the Politburo after a new round of accusations from Zhivkov's camp. The next year Yugov was sacked as Prime Minister and Zhivkov took over the position himself while retaining his role as BCP First Secretary. This consolidated his hold over both BCP and state administration, giving him the definitive voice in most aspects of Bulgarian political life.

Zhivkov's ascension into the office of Prime Minister coincided with another social and political "thaw" throughout the Eastern Bloc in the wake of the Cuban Missile Crisis. Accompanying this "thaw" was a reimagining of the relationship between the BCP and the Bulgarian citizen, evident in major changes to the infrastructure of the BCP that accompanied Zhivkov's assumption of executive authority. Faculty from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and the Academy of Agricultural Science were appointed to ministry posts, as the BCP took a more active role in integrating science and technology toward the efficiency of the Bulgarian economy. Technocrats better educated than their predecessors rose to positions of authority in the BCP *nomenklatura*, resulting in a more prosperous Bulgarian state evident in the growth in GDP from 6.7% in 1961-5 to 8.8% during the last half of the decade (Krause 2007, 373-4).

This economic surge occurred primarily through changes in BCP attitudes toward aspects of Western economic policy and technological production. Zhivkov and other

BCP elites realized that building a modern, prosperous Bulgaria required rethinking the policies of isolation from the West, a fact tacitly noted through the reestablishment of formal diplomatic relations with the United States in 1960. Western technology, Rossitza Guentcheva points out, offered both products desired by Bulgarian citizens and technologies to create a more efficient production base in industry and agriculture (Guentcheva 2008, 357). The challenge for the BCP was to separate such objects from their "bourgeois" and "capitalist" contexts, making them appropriate for consumption by the socialist citizen. The first part of this challenge involved the willingness to accept Western technologies into the socialist fold in order to prove that state socialism could better actualize the potential of those advances. The second involved reshaping what it meant to be a "modern" urban socialist citizen able to ethically engage with Western objects. The latter challenge proved to be far more difficult than the former, and had immense collateral effect on the music industry in Bulgaria throughout the decade.

Creating the "Modern" Urban Socialist Citizen

The rapid influx of young Bulgarians to urban centers after the Second World War necessitated the construction of the model socialist citizen necessary amidst the pernicious "bourgeois" influences of the city. The number of urban migrants peaked in the years between 1965 and 1967, which averaged 92,700 per year. During the entire period of 1946 to 1975, urban population grew from 24.7 percent of people living in Bulgaria to over 58 percent. The vast majority of these migrants were under the age of 30, many of who served in the voluntary youth construction brigades that provided public

services in the countryside and wanted to pursue professional goals in the city (Taylor 2004, 45).

Several factors were responsible for this upsurge in rural to urban migration. The increasing shift in production emphasis from agriculture to heavy industry beginning in the late-1940s created lucrative job opportunities at industrial plants and offices centered in Sofia, Plovdiv, Ruse, and other cities. Citizens were also motivated to relocate to the cities in order to pursue higher education opportunities unavailable in towns and villages. As a result, university enrollment doubled between 1960 and 1975 (ibid. 46). Women, who made up most of the migrant population by the mid-1960s, saw better and more stable marriage prospects amongst eligible urban men. Most importantly, the city offered the allure of modern cultural products and objects necessary to the maintenance of a sophisticated, active intelligentsia. Museums, restaurants, and social clubs amongst other things were of great interest to young Bulgarians who had grown bored with everyday life in the village, where such modern pursuits were few and far between (ibid. 47).

In response, the BCP sought to define what entailed a "rational socialist" model of consumption and leisure as city populations grew through the 1950s and 1960s, and the inevitable want of objects of luxury amongst the young and educated grew with them. Bulgarian cultural theorists of the era were divided on how best the BCP should handle the problem. Some worried about the effect on the individual of so-called "bourgeois residues," claiming that material possessions "could lead to fetishism and a consumerist psychology that neglected the important tasks awaiting the individual in society" (ibid. 47). Zhivkov himself admitted that consumer desire was inevitable, but one should not

become subsumed by the objects themselves. Ironically, this attitude toward the objects of bourgeois consumption had its roots in Stalinist-era practices. Personal consumption of bourgeois luxury items was not only permitted, but also encouraged in limited quantities by communist regimes throughout the Eastern Bloc as spoils for maintaining the proper socialist work ethic and values. Such objects were to be appreciated for their immutable aesthetic value as art, as pieces of technological achievement, or as the "genius of the working people who created them" (Dunham 1990; Yurchak 2006, 168-69).

However, the BCP's oscillation between the incorporation and purging of popular elements from Western culture was one of the defining characteristics of Bulgarian life during the 1960s. The rhetoric that defined the ideological justifications was always in flux, and yet often followed the logic shared by Zhivkov and others in the BCP that it was not *objects* that were ideologically unpalatable, but the *intent* behind their use. Ownership of so-called luxury items such as Western clothing, perfumes---especially those made from Bulgaria's own rose oil industry---, automobiles, and jewelry was common, particularly amongst the *nomenklatura* who were often given preferential treatment in shops due to their party status. The practice of owning two or more houses between the city and the countryside was also common, something that only the wealthy of capitalist countries could claim (Kaneff 2009, 68-69). The limits to which one could own such objects and consume them "ethically" as a citizen of socialism, however, was quite heterogeneous. Objects carried multiple meanings within the apparatuses of communist signification, so that no two objects of luxury could be consumed under the

same body of rules. A prime example of these shifting codes with regard to commodity objects is the BCP's relationship to tobacco production and consumption, both integral parts of everyday life in Bulgaria dating back to the early-19th century.[3]

Alexei Yurchak constructs an epistemic frame of this disjuncture between everyday socialist life and Western cultural products in 1960s Soviet Union that elucidates many of the same experiences for Bulgarians at the time. His "Imaginary West" covers "diverse array of discourses, statements, products, objects, visual images, musical expressions, and linguistic constructions that were linked to the West by theme or by virtue of their origin or reference" (Yurchak 2006, 161). In other words, the "Imaginary West" was a space of possibility existing both within and outside of the socialist milieu in which seemingly contradictory social interpretations existed under the ideology of state socialism. Because of these contradictions, Yurchak argues, interpretations of what constituted decadent bourgeois acts and objects and what was acceptable to socialist ethics was always changing.

From the perspective of the Soviet communist party, the process of evaluating these cultural forms was not based on the "subjective opinion of some external arbitrator" but instead a loose notion of "objective scientific laws of the physiology of human perception" (ibid. 163). This created an interpretive paradox in the logic of the BCP's ideological apparatus in terms of judgment since there was a lack of knowledge as to what constituted the objective ideal of said forms. "Since the objective canon against

[3] For a perspective on the history of tobacco and smoking in Bulgaria, see Neuburger, Mary, *Inhaling Modernity: Tobacco Production and Consumption in 19th and 20th Century Bulgaria* (in press).

which to compare was not known," Yurchak notes, "it could not be certain whether a concrete foreign influence in music was a manifestation of good internationalism or bad cosmopolitanism, and therefore each concrete case was potentially open to interpretation" (ibid. 163).

Yurchak's neologism of the "Imaginary West" lies at the heart of a historical complex of fascination that has been traced throughout the first two chapters of the dissertation. The "Imaginary West" in Bulgaria was in part a legacy of the bourgeois imagination toward Europe, and this imagining persisted as an essential element in Bulgarian 20th century identity construction. Although the most open instances of this fascination were tempered by government policy during the 1950s, the concept of critical judgment toward objects, as displayed by Konstantinov on his travels to America, found practice within communist life. Youth culture, in particular, carved their own kinds of identities within the "Imaginary West," fully understanding the limits and scope of such expression, as well as the shifting codes in the "objective canon" that allowed for small spaces of performance within these objects of Western-ness.

In Bulgaria, the lack of a tangible "objective canon" with which to aesthetically judge objects of "Western" origin or coding had a profound impact on artistic production. In the early-to-mid 1950s, this range of possible interpretation contributed greatly to the "nervous system" that surrounded artistic production as discussed in Chapter 2 – one never really knew if playing "jazz" could result in reprimand or imprisonment. By 1962, the closure of the *kontslagera* throughout Bulgaria ushered in the most (comparatively) liberal period for the artistic production since WWII. Members of artistic unions were

able to produce work with relative impunity outside of BCP interference, so long as there was no direct challenge or criticism of the BCP on political matters. The tradeoff for not challenging BCP censors was a relatively affluent lifestyle, complete with state-provided apartments, automobiles, paid vacations, research positions and fellowships at universities, and many other markers of prestige unavailable to other segments of the Bulgarian populous.

The BCP's motives toward such liberalization were only partially the result of the "thaw" penetrating the Eastern Bloc under Krushchev. Georgi Markov opined that Zhivkov's increasingly lenient stances toward the arts in the 1960s were the product of his fears of a similar uprising to Hungary in 1956, where the artists and writers played a pivotal role in organization and execution. He states that:

> [Zhivkov's] unerring instinct told him that the only people who could seriously disturb his quiet reign were precisely the members of the creative intelligentsia. Every one of the Communist Party's troubles – in Poland, in Czechoslovakia, in Hungary and in East Germany – had been stirred up by the intellectuals, artists and writers, or had occurred with their significant participation. In Bulgaria, attempts at military coups were condemned to failure in advance, not so much because they lacked support of the masses but because they were not supported by the creative intelligentsia. That is why Zhivkov took this intelligentsia under his personal protection and entrusted its management to his closest associates (Markov 1984, 235).

Markov's passage outlines one of the major paradoxes lain before the communist era intelligentsia during the 1960s. The relative openness of the period for writers, artists, and musicians (especially those working in the foreigner-catering resorts on the Black Sea like Varna and Burgas) was certainly desirable compared to the relatively draconian nature of Stalinist policies during the early-1950s. Gaining access to such a lifestyle,

however, required a certain degree of censorship by the artists themselves. The entire system was an elaborate form of bribery, one in which many writers, artists, and musicians willingly acquiesced, and also quietly enforced on other artists within their ranks.

These two aspects form the complex dialectical relationship between production and consumption in the constructing an aesthetics of "modern" socialism. The first was the need for the individual socialist citizen to practice careful and measured consumption of cultural objects perceived to be "Western" and "bourgeois." The second was the need for the intelligentsia and artists to produce ideologically viable products for consumption by the Bulgarian people. In his speech at the 16th Annual Conference of the Sofia organization of the Dimitrov Young Communist League (*Komsomol*) on March 14th, 1969, Zhivkov expressly emphasized the need for vigilance amongst both the artistic intelligentsia and young consumers. "Literature and the arts are an arena of the class struggle," he unequivocally states. "In this field a struggle between the ideologies is constantly being waged – noisily or silently, overtly or covertly. And there is nothing strange in the fact that now one, now another catches the 'Hong Kong flu' or some other imported disease" (ibid. 174).[4]

[4] For the few foreigners living in Bulgaria at that time, Zhivkov's constant denouncing of "Western" influences as "imported diseases" bordered on hyperbolic. Sir Anthony Lincoln, a career diplomat who served as British Minister to Bulgaria from 1960-63, wryly assessed Zhivkov's position on the matter after speech in 1963 in a dispatch to Lord Alec-Douglas Home, the Foreign Secretary at the time: "Some passages of Zhivkov's speech, especially on the behavior of youth, make one wonder if he rubs his eyes. According to Zhivkov, the Bulgarian youth believe that everything Bulgarian is boring and everything Western is fun - Western cars regarded with curiosity, waiting in lines for Western movies, listen to Western music, like western clothes, dance the 'Twist,' drink, whore… Zhivkov spoke with shocked tone about a particularly bad television program on the International Women's Day. One wonders what it might have been. He also spoke of feasts and orgies in the bars and restaurants in Plovdiv and other long and

As evident in the highly exoticizing construction of the "Hong Kong flu," the problem that confronted the BCP in establishing this socialist aesthetic was in tempering the more outlandish "Western" and "bourgeois" influences from everyday consumption. These concerns were an issue with regard to both Bulgarian citizens and the tourists from all over Europe whose money was desired to stimulate the economy.[5] The BCP's positions on many of these difficulties are elucidated in a transcript of a Politburo meeting on March 26, 1963 on "certain manifestations of the bourgeois influence among youth" (*Protokol "A" no. 81*, 1963). The primary concern of the meeting was to address the lack of vigilance of the *Komsomol* toward utilizing education on art, literature, and music to draw youth away from the allure of the more controversial aspects of Western bourgeois production. The organization's myopic focus on economic concerns, the Central Committee concluded, limited their effectiveness in "the struggle to build of the communist worldview in every boy and girl" (ibid. 1963).

The influence of pop and jazz music was of particular concern in the critique of the *Komsomol*'s effectiveness in these matters. Amongst the pontification against the *Komsomol*, education, and the youth themselves in terms of their aesthetic taste, the Politburo also sets a considerable amount of blame against the Union of Bulgarian Composers for ignoring the power of jazz and popular music in the everyday lives of

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dusty towns. Is life in Bulgaria an endless ball of Sodom? I was there last year, but it didn't seem that way to me at all" (Lincoln 1963, c.f. Penova 2010).

[5] Markov wrote about policies in which hotels and restaurants catered to foreigners paying with other, more lucrative forms of currency to the detriment of Bulgaria's own citizens. A common occurrence was for a Bulgarian family to come to a Black Sea resort for their designated vacation time, only to find their hotel room had been given to a foreigner, leaving them little recourse to make alternative arrangements (Markov 2004).

urban youth. Particularly damning is the following passage, which outlines the BCP's frustrations toward the blind eye turned by the UBC and other organizations of the popular arts in Bulgaria.

> What is now done in the country about the creation and distribution of pop music? Too little! The reason for this is not the lack of the opportunities in our composers. The great popularity at home and appreciation abroad of tunes like "Moon Rays" and "Tale" by Yosif Tsankov; "Love Harmonica," "Evening Song " and "Schumi Spring" by [Emil] Georgiev; "Neighborhood" by Petŭr Stŭpel, and others tells us that our composers can create wonderful pop music. But they do so little, mainly because of underestimation of the genre. It is considered unlikely not it is frivolous music, creativity of second quality. In practical terms this is reflected in the low part-time work of pop composers, which limits the effects of the material incentives in writing pop songs. In addition, some figures in the field of the musical creativity have a negative attitude toward pop music, and consider that it should not be allowed to our listener…that we find it inappropriate. Without denying the enormous educational impact of the symphonic, chamber and folk music, time should be given pop music works, since they have their place in people's lives (ibid. 1963).

The concern with "pop" in this statement on "bourgeois influences" without due recourse to "jazz" brings forth issues of context and discursive framing. The terms "pop" and "jazz" were analogous within BCP discourse in Bulgaria during this time, and were often used interchangeably in speeches, documents, and other modes of communication amongst the *nomenklatura*. A more wholesale division of the terms did not occur until the late-1960s, when jazz performance had been institutionalized in state ensembles, and the attention of the BCP turned toward the American and British rock of that time.

These private concerns addressed within the curtain of the Politburo in 1963 are broached publicly in Zhivkov's speech to the 9th Party Congress in 1966. Here he succinctly outlines his attitude toward objects of Western culture, and ushered in a new

era in how the BCP responded to such forms. The most important part of the speech is where he states that:

> The negative influence of decadent bourgeois art is seen mostly in pop art. In recent years our bandstand penetrated anti-artistic works and Poland, were reflected events that have nothing to do with moral character and cultures of our contemporary. We have however reason to believe that our platform will soon overcome these shortcomings, we will deal with their artistic qualities and national ordinary place that it deserves will fully meet the needs of working people, especially youth, to the interests of aesthetic education. But therefore the creators of pop works - Bulgarian composers and poets - to use the inexhaustible richness of Bulgarian folklore to contemporary needs of pop, light and dance music (Zhivkov 1966, 133; c.f. Gadzhev 2010, 207).

The responsibility for crafting the new vision of an ethical socialist popular music, then, was placed in the hands of highly trained professional musicians tapping into the "inexhaustible richness" of folklore. Groups like the Koutev Ensemble had been practicing this kind of state "folklore" since the early-1950s, and the success of similar ensembles no doubt influenced the adoption of the apparatus of aesthetics into the creation of pop and jazz. Before this adoption could occur, however, the BCP needed to streamline the process of training musicians, singers, and composers in the proper, socialist aesthetic of popular music and jazz. Such a strategy required a new, centralized agency to serve as the arbiter of such an aesthetic, as well as the basis for the creation of state professional jazz and pop ensembles later in the decade.

Estrada and the Bulgarian Popular Music Industry

The centerpiece of the communist effort to exert some measure control over popular repertoire and consumption came with the establishment of the Office of Popular Music (*Estrada*) in 1960. Attached to the Ministry of Internal Trade, *Estrada*'s purpose

was to train a body of professional vocalists and instrumentalists to fill the demand for live entertainment at restaurants and bars populating the cities and the resorts on the Black Sea. The bureau was also responsible of requiring the registration of musicians and groups and overseeing their repertoire, striking songs deemed to be too "bourgeois" or "decadent" with Western influences. *Estrada's* first director was Manol Kushev (1904-84), a longtime member of the BCP who was originally purged and imprisoned in the wake of the Kostov trial in 1949. After his release following the death of Stalin, Kushev worked as the head of an antique bookstore in Sofia. In 1958, he was appointed Director of the Music Library (*muzfonda*) at the Union of Bulgarian Composers, where he oversaw the cataloguing and publication of the works of UBC members. Kushev parlayed this influence with the UBC to pitch the idea of *Estrada* to his superiors, and was subsequently charged with chartering the organization and serving as its first director.

Kushev's vision for *Estrada* was primarily as an entity to streamline the professionalization of pop musicians in Bulgaria. With no such programs in the country's music schools and conservatories, *Estrada* was the only institution at the time devoted to the training of instrumentalists, singers, and ensembles for the growing leisure industry in Sofia, in other cities, and on the Black Sea coast at resort areas like "Sunny Beach" (*Slŭnche Bryag*). However, *Estrada* found difficulty in properly enforcing the BCP's aesthetic vision for pop music and jazz from the very start. In addition to the constant shifting of what kinds of musical production and consumption were considered acceptable at a given moment, the bureau could not conceivably police every outlet in the

country. An example of these difficulties is displayed by an incident that occurred in 1961, when a BCP commission investigating the presence of recorded music in urban locales banned the use of "jazz" music in Bulgarian jukeboxes. The ban, precipitated by a jukebox at the Sofia Airport that was judged to contain too much music of "Western" influence, was momentous enough to gain a short article in a June issue of *Billboard* in the United States. Though the article did not elaborate on either the names of artists or song titles present in the offending jukebox, the author noted that the investigating commission ultimately placed blame on the newly formed *Estrada*. The fact that the jukebox at the airport in Sofia played only Western music was a "distressing commentary upon the failure of our cultural program" that "merely reflects the general tastes of the public…[through] the type of music being played by our dance bands and orchestras" (*Billboard* 1961, 62). *Estrada*'s lack of success and vigor in policing these bands was due to the fact that all but 5 of the 24 officials in the bureau were "businessmen" devoid of "music appreciation." The commission went out of its way to reinforce the neutrality of the jukeboxes themselves, claiming that they were simply "mechanical instrument[s] – neither good nor bad of itself" (ibid. 62).

Kushev consistently defended his positions on enforcement to his superiors in the BCP, claiming that he was simply adhering to the desires of youth taste at the time. Producing music that no one wanted to listen to, he argued, did nothing to sway Bulgarian youth back into the BCP's fold. Unfortunately, this lack of zeal was his undoing. The popularity of the "Twist," in particular, sparked a great deal of controversy within BCP circles. When the popular dance craze came to Bulgaria in the early-1960s,

there were fears of its overly sexualized movements, its fast tempo, and the potential for catastrophic injury to the knees and ankles, detrimental to the ability of youth to contribute to the workforce. After the Twist was finally banned in 1964, there were several incidents where offending dancers were detained by the authorities. In one incident a filmmaker was arrested in Varna and condemned by local communist officials, though he was ultimately able to secure his freedom without enduring imprisonment (Taylor 2004, 122).

Kushev's lack of dogmatism in using *Estrada* as a vehicle to shape public taste came to a head in April of 1963. A speech by Zhivkov on the 15th of that month to members of the Ministry of Education and Culture decried the burgeoning influence of Western "bourgeois" aesthetics on Bulgarian pop music. He was particularly spiteful of youth meeting rooms (*kuponi*, also known as *dzhabuli*, *zhurove*, or *soareta*) in Sofia and other cities where drunkenness and loud, distasteful music labeled as "jazz" existed in massive quantities. As far as Zhivkov was concerned the blame laid exclusively with Kushev, who was fired as director of *Estrada* shortly afterward. Adamant that he was being unfairly scapegoated for forces beyond his individual control, Kushev was eventually reassigned out of Bulgaria, serving as Sales Representative to Albania until his retirement from public service in 1968 (Penova 2010).

The effect on the popular music industry by Zhivkov's dedication to creating localized socialist manifestations of "bourgeois" music to combat the influence of rock 'n roll was profound in terms of raw production. The number of Bulgarian-produced albums of original popular music jumped from 8 in 1960 to 120 in 1968 (Gadzhev 2010,

217). The school that *Estrada* established to train singers was soon emulated by other organs of the BCP's popular culture apparatus. In 1963, Bulgarian National Radio created a similar studio specifically for pop vocalists. The next year, the state tourism bureau called "Balkantourist" (*Balkanturist*) opened their own studio to train singers and musicians employed to play resorts for Bulgarians and foreigners on the Black Sea (ibid. 500). Taken together, these training academies were instrumental in creating a base of mostly female pop singers who became the first generation of artists in the Bulgarian pop industry. Though more professional groups were being produced by these various agencies, there was still great concern as to the effectiveness of this training. A series of exams administered through *Estrada* in December 1962 to grant certification to individual musicians were particularly alarming for BCP leadership. Of 1,428 instrumentalists tested, only 962 passed certification and 677 receiving a grade of "musically savvy." Vocalists fared even worse: 75 of 196 certified, and only 4 judged as "musically savvy" (*Protokol "A" no. 81*, 1963).

Almost every jazz musician active at the time passed under *Estrada's* authority at some point in his or her career. Some, like future pop and jazz star Lili Ivanova, started their decades-long careers by utilizing the bureau's resources. As young Bulgarians became more cognizant of American and British rock during the early 1960s, the "jazz" of the larger amateur and professional ensembles active during the 1950s were the perfect platforms through which to project the desired aesthetic of Bulgarian popular music. Thus, the state jazz ensembles were born as a bridge between the communist BCP and the disaffected youth of Bulgaria's cities.

THE "BIG BAND" AS INSTRUMENT OF SOCIALIST AESTHETICS

The large pop and jazz ensembles – the ever-ubiquitous "big band" – had been mainstays of Bulgarian urban musical life since the National Radio's salon orchestras and *Jazz Ovcharov* in the mid-1930s. These kinds of bands survived primarily by working in restaurants and casinos playing everything from tangos, foxtrots, rags, Bulgarian "urban songs" (*gradni pesni*), and the "swing" popularized by American big bands. This repertoire had, unsurprisingly, changed little after 1944. Bringing in recordings and transcriptions from outside of Bulgaria was both difficult and dangerous, and constant scrutiny over repertoire necessitated altering the names of artists or songs titles. This meant that there was a degree of stagnation surrounding the music of big bands during the 1950s. Dimitŭr Simeonov captures this atmosphere of jazz performance during most of the decade when he describes the typical night for *Jazz of the Optimists* during their residency at Hotel Bulgaria from 1954 to 1960.

> The repertoire required to be known back then [by bands] included classical and modern music. The restaurant had a grand piano, and *Jazz of the Optimists* played every night from 7PM to 11PM. The first two hours were for symphonies and chamber music, the next two for dancing. We played everything. We had problems with the state because we had invented a composer named "Roze." We played Gershwin, Armstrong – everything. And as they asked us what we played, we responded "Summertime, by Roze" or "Rhapsody in Blue, by Roze" again. "What is it" they asked. "Rusnak" (Russian) we replied (Moskov 2009).

As the decade drew to a close, this stagnation in repertoire and format is precisely what drew the Ministry of Education and Culture to make the "big band" as the template for the first state pop and jazz groups. By the late-1950s, there was a tacit acceptance of older, more established styles of jazz popular prior to WWII. Wary of the influence that

Western rock was having throughout the Eastern Bloc during the late-1950s and early-1960s, the BCP and the Ministry of Education and Culture began to turn to prewar styles of jazz as an ideologically palatable alternative.

The gradual acceptance of some forms of jazz was first proliferated through amateur ensembles in high schools (*gimnatsii*) and universities. Small dance bands were encouraged as an extracurricular activity and a way to promote anti-delinquency in youth the same way as sports teams and academic clubs were. *Student* 5, a group consisting of amateurs from Sofia University and the State Academy of Music, was one of the more popular school-affiliated amateur groups of the late-1950s. Also of note was "Stalin" State Polytechnic Academy Orchestra (*Orkestra na Dŭrzhavna Politekhnata "Stalin"*) from the mid-1950s, briefly mentioned in Chapter 2.

Groups like *Student* 5, *"Stalin"* and Big Band Gabrovo became feeder groups through which the new state ensembles could gather talent and fill their ranks with musicians skilled in all of the necessary popular styles. This movement of amateur musicians into professional ensembles was, in essence, necessary due ostensibly to a labor shortage. During the development of the foreign tourist industry on the Black Sea in the late-1950s, administrators in *Estrada* and Balkantourist were struck by the lack of viable Bulgarian groups to provide entertainment on resorts like "Golden Sands" (*Zlatni Pyasutsi*) and "Sunny Beach" (*Slŭnche Bryag*). This lack became so acute that in 1961, Balkantourist invited the Polish band of Andrzej Kurylewicz, featuring vocalist Wanda Warska, to play a three-month engagement in Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna. Around the same time, the quartet of fellow Pole Krzysztof Komeda played an engagement at the

Astoria that was well received and reinforced the dearth of qualified Bulgarian musicians to compete with such foreign groups (Gadzhev 2010, 193-94).

To fill the void, *Estrada* turned to the most experienced professional musicians in Bulgaria at that time to lead these ensembles, including many who had been under suspicion of "bourgeois" practices in earlier decades. Dimitar Ganev, the clarinetist/saxophonist who formed the *Jazztempo Orchestra* (*Orkestŭr Dzhaztempo*) in the early-1940s, was tasked with heading the *Balkanton Orchestra* (*Orkestŭr Balkanton*), the state ensemble that served as the "house band" on Balkanton's pop and jazz recordings, in 1963. The group recorded over 1,200 songs and instrumental works between 1963 and 1971 and featured top young musicians like saxophonist/flutist Moris Aladzhem and drummer Petŭr Slavov (Gadzev 2010, 188). Another example was Lyudmil Georgiev, a founding member of *Jazz of the Youth* (*Dzhaz na Mladite*) once sent to the *kontslagera* in the 1950s. He was given leadership of *Sofia Orchestra* (*Orkestŭr Sofiya*) in 1964, one of the first state-run popular music groups and a precursor to similar ensembles in the 1970s and 1980s like *FSB* (*Formatsiya Studiyo Balkanton*), one of the most popular rock groups of the entire communist era (ibid. 195).

Estraden Orkestŭr na Bŭlgarskoto Radio i Televiziya

The most notable and influential of the new state-run popular ensembles was undoubtedly the EOBRT, officially created by decree of the Ministry of Education and Culture on March 3rd, 1960. The ensemble was conceived as an elite group featuring the best jazz and pop musicians in Bulgaria, serving as the BNR's primary recording and

broadcasting group. EOBRT also, I argue, served as a symbol of the BCP's attempts to make Bulgarian-made popular music more desirable to the growing population of Western-oriented youth living in the cities.

The first incarnation of the EOBRT was made up of professional musicians pulled mainly from the bands of the Theater of Satire in Sofia (*Satirichniya teatŭr*) and *Studio 5* (*Studiyo 5*), one of the major Sofian pop ensembles of the late-1950s. The Ministry and the Union of Bulgarian Composers chose Thessaloniki- born Jules Levi (1930-2006) for the position of artistic director and conductor,, who was a prominent member of the UBC and a proven leader of large ensembles within the communist music industry. The Ministry of Education and Culture believed that Levi was an ideal choice to run the ensemble given his vast experience as a conductor and arranger at such a young age, qualities which gave him an inside perspective on youth culture. Indeed, his body of work to that point was impressive. In 1950 he became conductor of the *Ensemble of the Bulgarian Armed Forces*, a position that he parlayed into an appointment as composer and conductor for the Theatre of Satire in 1959. His short time with *Theatre of Satire Orchestra* clearly gave him familiarity with the abilities of a majority of the musicians making up the EOBRT, consider how many of them would be drawn into the latter ensemble.

At the last moment, Levi's appointment to the EOBRT directorship was diverted by Boyan Danovski, the theatrical director of the Theatre of Satire. Danovski claimed that he and Levi had put a great deal of effort into the theater's creation over the prior year, and the project could not stand the loss of both Levi and a vast majority of the

theater's orchestra. After much deliberation, Levi agreed to stay with the Theatre of Satire, but as a compromise oversaw the auditions for the band and recommended a new director to replace him. He also left the band with one of its first major works, 1961's *Divertimenti Konsertati* for Trumpet and Orchestra, written specifically for ensemble member Toncho Rusev.

Levi's recommendation for director was composer Emil Georgiev (1926-1992), another young member of the UBC who had significant experience as an arranger of pop and jazz music for large ensembles.[6] Though Georgiev's time at the head of the band (1960-61) was brief, he did encourage many younger members of the ensemble to arrange pieces for the band, giving them a more active role in the ensemble's repertoire choice and artistic direction. When he decided to step down in 1962, the National Radio had plenty of potentially qualified conductors already within the group. Their choice of twenty-five year old Milcho Leviev passed over several other candidates who were older and were more experienced in the BCP's professional music apparatus. However controversial his appointment may have been, under Leviev the EOBRT transformed from simply a state-run professional pop and jazz ensemble into a band that took the first step toward creating a popular music based on the "inexhaustible resource" of Bulgarian folklore that Zhivkov articulated throughout the 1960s.

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[6] From 1955 to 1960 Georgiev served as conductor of both the Pop Orchestra of the Concert Directorate (*Estradniya Orkestŭr kŭm Kontsertna direktsiya*) and the Orchestra of the Theater of the Army (*Orkestŭr na Teatra na armiya*). As a composer, he wrote some of the most well known Bulgarian popular songs of the decade. The most famous of these was *Chiko ot Porto Riko* which was written for actor Neicho Popov in the early-1950s and made famous by Lea Ivanova.

Milcho Leviev and the EOBRT

Born in Plovdiv in 1937, Milcho Leviev studied piano with Andrei Stoyanov and composition with Pancho Vladigerov at the State Academy of Music, graduating in 1960. During his studies he won second prize at the prestigious International Competition in Vienna for his "Toccata for Piano," the first of many such awards in his career. Leviev's work with Vladigerov was instrumental in his development, as Vladigerov was one of the first Bulgarian art music composers to recognize the value of incorporating diverse musical elements into compositions, including jazz and Bulgarian folk music. Leviev applied many of these techniques to his already keen interest in jazz, which he heard while in Plovdiv through Voice of America radio broadcasts and in Sofia through the spate of live groups playing in the late-1950s. He also was member of an extracurricular circle of musicians at the State Academy who studied improvisation techniques with jazz pianist and scholar Ivan Peev, one of the first such collectives in Bulgaria (Gadzhev 2010, 190).

After graduation, Leviev returned to Plovdiv and took residence as a composer at the city's Drama Theater (*Dramatichen teatŭr*) and simultaneously served as professor of chamber music at the Plovdiv State Academy of Music. He served the EOBRT as an arranger, supplying several pieces for the band in 1961 and 1962 while working on several other projects, including a musical called "The Roses" (*Rozite*). When Georgiev announced that he was stepping down, Leviev was recommended as his replacement based on his wide range of skills as a conductor, arranger, and composer of jazz and art music. His appointment was something of a departure from the credentials used to select

the EOBRT's first two conductors. Leviev was a relative newcomer who had only begun his career in the early-1960s, having not developed through the BCP's musical ensembles in the 1950s as did his predecessors. He proved himself more than capable for the post, immediately setting to work reshaping the ensemble's repertoire to include several of his compositions stretching the boundaries of pop, jazz, and folk music.

These early compositions for the EOBRT garnered him a great deal of critical praise from music critics. Lilcho Borisov, a composer and son of jazz orchestra pioneer Boris Leviev, wrote the following review of "Study" (*Studiya*), the first piece that Leviev wrote for the ensemble shortly after taking over from Georgiev as conductor in 1962.

> The young composer and conductor of the State Popular Radio Orchestra Milcho Leviev surprises the public with the performance of his "Studiya" for pop orchestra. In a fresh theme, stylized with a sense for artistic measure, M. Leviev has built his study in various forms. With many a true sense to jazz music the author has given way to his creative invention. Every [musical] period is close to new innovative ideas, fresh humor and remarkable professional skill (Borisov 1963, c.f. Gadzhev 2010, 220-221).

The piece incorporated many elements of Leviev's compositional style for the EOBRT, most notably his use of rhythmic *ostinato* and repetition drawing from a variety of stylistic influences. The piece opens with the drums establishing a snare/tom rhythm reminiscent of a Cuban *mambo* that is picked up by the trombones in the 5th measure. Each entrance of the *mambo* motif is displaced at the octave, culminating in a "shout chorus" (mm. 13) with the motif played by the lead trumpet two octaves higher than the first statement in the trombones. Underneath this textural build is a pedal drone in the bass trombone and acoustic bass that maintains the rhythmic motif. This drone is one of the most common stylistic attributes associated with folk music present in Leviev's

compositions, harkening toward local instruments such as bagpipe (*gaida*) or *gŭdulka*. The rest of the piece deviates from this hybridized texture, settling more readily into fast 4-beat swing with thick orchestration reminiscent of Stan Kenton's arranging style, though the opening drone texture reprises at the end of the piece after a series of improvisations by ensemble members.

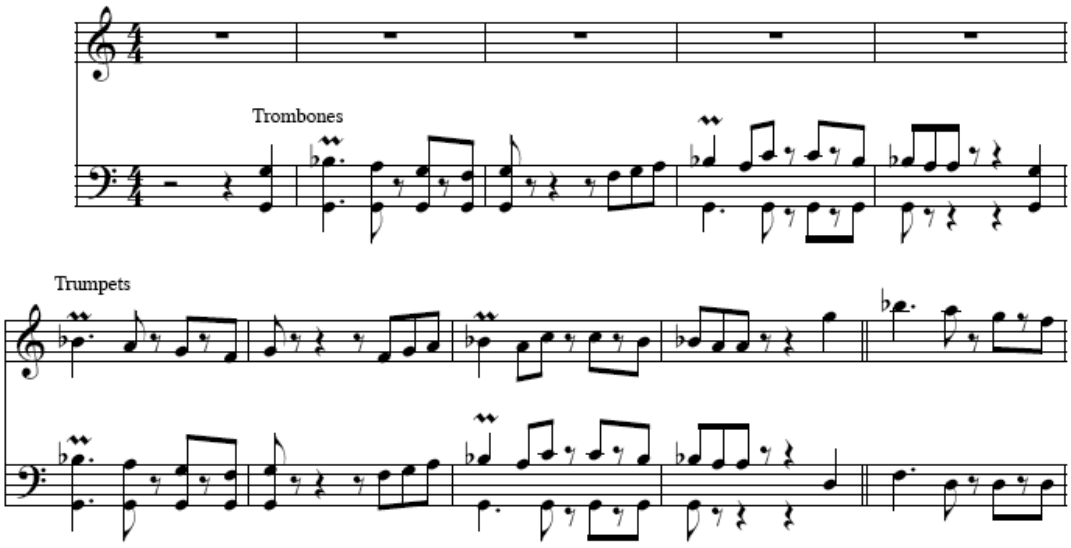

Fig. 3.1: **"**Studiya" for Jazz Orchestra (1962), mms. 4-13

1962's "Blues in 9" (*Blus v 9*), another of Leviev's compositions for the EOBRT, contains many of these same traits. The introduction to "Blues in 9" features unmetered, *a capella* brass phrases punctuated accents idiomatic to the Pirin-region female vocal style.[7] The drums and trombones subsequently enter with a driving 12-bar blues,

[7] This close-harmony style of singing was popularized in Western Europe and the United States in the late-1980s with the release of "The Mystery of Bulgarian Voices" (*Les Mystere de Voix Bulgares*), a four

outlined rhythmically by an ostinato constructed from a 2+2+2+3 (9/8) metric delineation. Though the piece is set to a medium tempo, overt associations with particular regional dance in 9/8, like *daichovo horo*, are ambiguous (Fig. 3.1). The 12-bar blues form also carries the ostinato drone in the bass trombone and acoustic bass, as in the opening measures to "Studiya." Muted trumpets add short, blues-based punctuations over top of the trombones, eventually backed by a series of longer, drawn-out unison riffs in the saxophones. The rhythm section maintains a driving rock groove reminiscent of the "surf rock" popular throughout the West at that time. The "surf" connotation was emphasized by the use of slightly detuned strings on an electric guitar, a sound pioneered by American guitarists Eddie Cochran and Dick Dale.

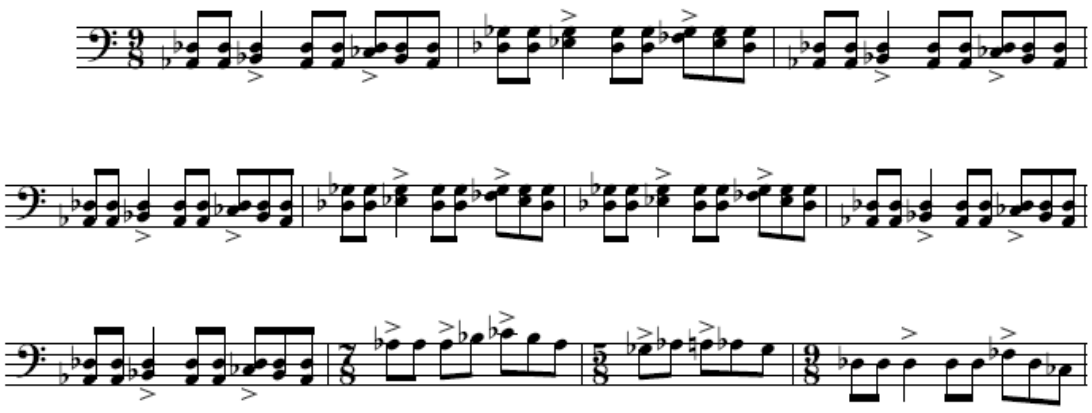

Fig. 3.2: Trombone/Bass ostinato, "Blues in 9" (1962)

volume series of the Radio Ensemble Women's Choir that won a Grammy for World Music performance. The phenomenon of the "Mysterious Voices" has been extensively covered in many other works on Bulgarian music.

As Leviev gained stature and influence at the head of EOBRT, his pieces assumed a more direct commentary of communist aesthetic policy in the arts. 1966's "Anti-Waltz" (*Anti Valz*) was intended as a critique of the limited aesthetic scope employed by the Union of Bulgarian Composers at that time. "I wanted to express my disdain for conformity in society," he stated in a 2004 interview, "using the waltz as a symbol" (Levy 2007a, 34). The veracity of using the waltz as a symbol came from the UBC's strict adherence to forms, structures, and genres of Western art music. These policies extended beyond the art music genre compositions of UBC members, and were part of the reason that many compositions for the EOBRT were titled as if they were symphonic works (*Divertimenti Konsertati za Trompet*, for example). The intent was not lost on the UBC and the National Radio, whose censors declared in January 1966 that "Anti-Waltz" could not be broadcast without a change to its provocative title. Leviev stood his ground and the piece was eventually broadcast under its original title (Petrov 2010).

Claire Levy agrees that for Leviev's contemporaries in the 1960s, the allegorical nature of *"*Anti-Waltz*"* was clear. "The piece can be read as a provocation" she writes, "called forth by continuing ideological dictates and by the fact that then-current directions in music continued to be opposed in an authoritarian manner that preferred 'trustworthy' and 'historically accepted' ideas about 'democratic' musical form such as the waltz" (Levy 2007a, 11). The embedding of such provocation within the context of the piece was due to Leviev's experiences growing up in Plovdiv in the 1950s. He was profoundly influenced by a disparate collection of artists, writers, "hipsters" (*stilyagi*), and free thinkers populated the underground youth culture of the city, many of whom

were recent migrants from the villages eager for a taste of an urban cosmopolitan milieu. Writer Georgi Bozhilov, sculptor Ioan Leviev, and musician Vesselin Nikolov were all Plovdiv natives and contemporaries with Milcho Leviev, who became part of the artistic vanguard of the 1960s that sought to use the apparatuses put in place by the BCP to their own ideas about art. These artists saw themselves as living in the communist system in an everyday sense, but not part of that system in any tangible way that defined their sense of values or desires.

Yurchak notes such a deterritorialized subject formation as being part of everyday life in the Soviet Union during the same period. He argues that the term used by some of the Russian urban youth for self-identification – *vnye* ("outside") – was a signifier of their lack of desire to integrate into the codes and ideology of communist life.

> [*Vnye* was] *a* particular relation to the system, where one lives within it but remains relatively "invisible." One employs discursive means that do not quite fit the pro/anti dichotomy in relation to authoritative discourse and cannot be quite articulated within the parameters of that discourse…Considering something ["uninteresting"] *neinteresno* and being *vnye* are related categories. Both refer to something that is irrelevant, because the person, although living within the system, is not tuned into a certain semantic field of meaning…Although uninterested in the Soviet system, these milieus heavily drew on that system's possibilities, financial subsidies, cultural values, collectivist ethics, forms of prestige, and so on (Yurchak 2006, 132).

Bulgarians also experienced the affect of being "outside" of communist ethics whilst still living and working inside of its labor systemization. Although there was no Bulgarian linguistic equivalent to the Soviet concept of *vnye*, the experience was still deeply imbedded in Bulgarian society and a concern of its governing institutions. Recall, for example, *Literaturen Front*'s 1953 article on youth disintegration from Chapter 2, or the

1963 Politburo meeting regarding youth culture and lack of ideological zeal. If one was to believe the content of some of Zhivkov's speeches on youth culture during the 1960s, *vnye* was more of an epidemic than a viable form of self construction within the communist milieu.

The kind of "detachment" facilitated by a state of *vnye* could be seen amongst many of the Bulgarian professional non-jazz groups during this time, many of whom were frustrated by the constant interference of the BCP into ensemble affairs. This state of affairs was most true with the state folk ensembles like Sofia's "Philip Kutev," Plovdiv's "Trakiya," and the State Radio Ensemble. Donna Buchanan shows that in the implementation of the so-called pan-regional "Koutev Line" (*Kutevska liniya*) was of great frustration to orchestra members who were masters of localized folk traditions. The practice of giving creative authority over these ensembles to UBC composers and arrangers unfamiliar with the idiomatic nuances of local styles alienated many of the musicians, who felt their expertise in those same styles was wasted. As such, musicians frequently complained about the non-idiomatic use of ornamentation or song forms, while being ignored or lambasted by conductors and arrangers. The end result was that many of the musicians themselves were never totally *musically* invested in the end product of the state ensembles, even though their sense of professionalism dictated that they make the best of their relationships with the composers and directors (Buchanan 1991, 2004, 2006). As such, musicians did not show up for rehearsals, read the newspaper as they played, and commonly make remarks such as "for me this job is only a job," as one proclaimed in an interview (ibid. 2006, 237).

The case of Leviev and the EOBRT presents a similar case of subjective detachment while operating under the apparatus of state professionalism in music. I agree with Levy's assertion that "Blues in 9," "Anti-Waltz," and Leviev's other compositions for the EOBRT operated as a "provocation, called forth by continuing ideological dictates" (Levy 2007a, 11). At the same time, there were conceptual levels other than subtle compositional resistance to state aesthetic practice at play in these pieces. The pieces themselves may have been intended as a provocation. But the space allowing for Leviev's artistic vision for the EOBRT was a product of the desire of the BCP to create a Bulgarian popular culture that could compete for the hearts and minds of youth. Since incorporating elements of Bulgaria's folk traditions were essential for the BCP's platform toward a popular youth culture, compositions engaging with them were coded as acceptable pieces of the socialist aesthetic. This policy gave composers like Leviev considerable advantages not available to their brethren a decade earlier. The appearance of holding the BCP line on issues of popular culture gave composers considerable cache amongst BCP elites. In fact, the most resistance toward Leviev's vision for the EOBRT came not from the *nomenklatura*, but from colleagues in the UBC who felt he was threatening the stability of their profession (Gadzhev 2010).

Leviev's broad and inclusive compositional aesthetic was rare amongst UBC members in the early-1960s. Leviev's teacher, Pancho Vladigerov, was himself famous for incorporating fragments of popular cosmopolitan styles like the foxtrot, bolero, and ragtime in the same way that Maurice Ravel had profoundly influenced Vladigerov around the time of WWI. The influence on Leviev was palpable, as he historically has

been reluctant to conceive of his own output within the boundaries of genres or forms. Instead, he has opted for genre montages that draw from various styles, like the *folk music/mambo/swing* of "Studiya" or the *folk music/surf rock* of "Blues in 9". In fact, his philosophy about music history in general has been one of inclusiveness and cosmopolitanism that belie strictures of nationalist discourses. Leviev himself stated as much in an interview conducted in 1999.

> …music has always been an international and cosmopolitan art, especially jazz, and not just in recent times. If you take the time of Bach, and after that – they all learned from one another, mixing the Italian, French and English schools. For example, Bach borrowed from Vivaldi, Vivaldi from Purcell in England, and so on. Those are completely different cultures. Or in more recent times, when all cultures are already intertwined: Indian, Asian, European, American, African and so on. This shows that in a certain sense there has always been globalization. Just not on the same scale as it is today (Nikolova 1999, 5; c.f. Levy 2007a, 26).

This practice of compositional montage was an incredibly radical concept for jazz in Bulgaria at this time. The scrutiny under which repertoire was constantly examined made it difficult to conduct such experiments during the 1950s. But there were also very few composers and arrangers in Bulgaria during that time with the skill and training to produce these kinds of pieces. So what made Leviev's compositions for the EOBRT more widely accepted? I argue that he was successful precisely because of the variegated responses toward objects coded "Western" by the BCP during this period. Leviev's crafting of questionable Western influences into a unique musical statement within the body of a state professional ensemble fit in with the ideal of communist aesthetics

perpetuated through Zhivkov's speeches.[8] The sum of socialist aesthetics during this period was an attempt to recode "Western" and "bourgeois" artistic forms (like jazz and pop music) into something that reflected the ethics of both the modern socialist state and citizen. Leviev's EOBRT montages were one of the first realizations of this aesthetic ideal in socialist Bulgaria, and part of the reason why they were accepted relatively unproblematically by the *nomenklatura*. "Paraphrase on the song 'Yesterday'" (*Parafraza vŭrhu pesenata "Vchera"*), his arrangement of Paul McCartney's "Yesterday" from 1965 is a clear example of this deconstruction and reformation. "*Parafraza*" itself refers to the use of pieces of McCartney's famous song, an object of the "West" crafted especially for the EOBRT. In the eyes of the BCP, this "paraphrase" was a reflection of that ensemble's, and by extension state socialism's, ingenuity.

In summation, Leviev's EOBRT pieces were surrounded by a pronounced and politically motivated dialectic of musical practice. His wide use of influences from both ideologically acceptable and problematic sources was a subjective, artistic provocation of the compositional status quo in the UBC, *Estrada*, and other organs of communist aesthetics. But Leviev's musical philosophy also fit within the aesthetic vision for professional music under state socialism. His pieces, most importantly, opened the door for further experimentation in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the eventual disengagement of "jazz" and "Western pop," two terms that had been synonymous in communist Bulgaria since the end of the Second World War.

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[8] Such an ironically "modernist" montage of styles and influences became common in the UBC during the 1970s and 1980s, even making becoming part of the *obrabotki* of the state folk ensembles, much to the chagrin of the musicians working for those groups (Buchanan 2006).

Ironically, many of Leviev's problems with BCP censorship during this period came not from his own compositions, but from arrangements that lacked such stylistic ambiguity. Though the BCP seemed to give him a fair amount of freedom in the programming of works, at times officials stepped in and level various criticisms that showed their relative ignorance of these styles outside of their ideological coding at the time. In 1964, for example, Leviev attempted to program some Brazilian *bossa nova* into the EOBRT repertoire list. The compositions of Antonio Carlos Jobim had been popularized the world over by saxophonist Stan Getz, guitarist Charlie Byrd, and others, and Leviev was adamant that keeping up with stylistic trends was vital the ensemble's professional image. The stir this caused for Leviev and the ensemble is recalled in a 2005 interview. Leviev recalls that:

> One day the [BNR]'s party secretary called me. "Comrade Leviev, bossa nova ought to be stopped," he ordered.
> "But why?" I asked with astonishment.
> "Do you know who brought it to North America from Brazil?" he asked me.
> "American musicians and most of all Stan Getz," was my explicit answer.
> "And who sent them to Brazil? The FBI - in order to outdo the cha-cha of our sister Cuban nation" (Krapcheva 2005).

This exchange is an example of the local mapping of power dynamics on "foreign" objects, and the tangible effect that this had on the EOBTR's repertoire during the early-1960s. The BCP secretary couldn't imagine the spread of *bossa nova* to the United States for any reason other than political motives, because such an act was part of the *modus operandi* of the BCP at that time. The fact that by that point there was a long history of incorporating dance music from Latin America dating back to the late-1920s was deemed irrelevant by the *nomenklatura*. Also irrelevant was consideration of the spread of such

music through films, visiting musicians, and the radio in Bulgaria during the 1950s and 1960s (Levy 1994, 12).

The exchange shows the idea of a pan-communist solidarity in the arts with the inference that *bossa nova's* entire existence was an American plot to limit the exposure of Cuban music around the world. The educational and artistic exchange between Cuba and Bulgaria has thus far been relatively ignored in scholarship about the two countries. There has been, in fact, a long history of Cuban musicians playing concerts and continuing their education in Bulgaria during this time, in addition to the preferential treatment given to Cuban styles by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Cuban operatic vocalists were particularly common in Bulgarian conservatories, given the strong tradition of opera in the country dating back to the late-1920s.[9]

EOBRT after Leviev

Leviev's vision for the EOBTR was continued by Vili Kazasyan (1934 - 2008), who assumed directorship of the ensemble in 1966. Social and political turmoil in the Eastern Bloc during the late-1960s and early-1970s was reflected in the decreasing autonomy the ensemble had in terms of repertoire selection during the Leviev years. Nonetheless, Kazasyan proved himself a more that capable replacement for Leviev, evident in the fact that Kazasyan held onto the ensemble's directorship for over thirty years and cemented its reputation as one of the finest professional ensembles in

[9] Operatic tenor Adolfo Casas, for example, graduated from the State Conservatory of Music and Sofia in the 1960s and received rave reviews when staring in a production of Puccini's *La Boheme* at the Plovdiv Opera Theater in 1976 (Orovio 2004, 47). Gustavo Lázaro and Daniel Escudero were other notable Cuban Opera singers who studied in Bulgaria at this time.

communist Bulgaria. As with the other ensemble directors to that point, Kazasyan's credentials were impeccable. Born in Sofia into a family of prominent Armenian musicians, he was the younger brother of Edi Kazasyan, saxophonist and future husband of vocalist Lea Ivanova. Kazasyan began his jazz career as a pianist in *Jazz of the Youth* in 1953, though that incarnation of the group soon dispersed. Later in the decade he was a founding member of the pop ensemble *Studio 5* and also played with the *Theatre of Satire Orchestra*, through which he became one of the charter members of the EOBRT in 1960. Kazasyan started as one of the ensemble pianists, but soon started arranging pieces for the band. In 1964 he became assistant conductor of the ensemble under Leviev, positioned himself as his heir apparent before finally becoming director in 1967.

Kazasyan oversaw the EOBRT's transition from its original incarnation as a recording ensemble into a musical ambassador of Bulgaria's popular music industry in the 1960s and 1970s. He supervised several tours of the band to various countries in Eastern Europe, but also to Germany, Switzerland, and eventually as far as Cuba. In 1967, he oversaw a lucrative tour of the EOBRT to the Soviet Union, becoming the first state-run Bulgarian jazz group to play in the communist jazz centers of Moscow and Leningrad. Milcho Leviev also participated on this tour as guest conductor and soloist, playing his compositions on Soviet soil for the first time (Gadzhev 2010, 224-25).

One of Kazasyan's crowning achievements during the early years of his conductorship was the release of an LP entitled *Variety Orchestra of Bulgarian National Radio and Television* (*Estraden Orkestŭr na Bulgarskoto Radio i Televiziya* on Balkanton) (BTA 1149) in 1969. The album was the first full LP release of BNR's top

recording ensemble for jazz and popular music, and also one of the first releases of Milcho Leviev's compositions for a large ensemble.[10] Included on the album were "Anti-Waltz" and "Paraphrase on the song 'Yesterday'" featuring *Jazz Focus '65* flutist Simeon Shterev as a guest soloist. Also recorded were two compositions by Kazasyan ("Dilemma" and "Three Moods for Jazz Orchestra"), one each by Angel Zaberski ("The Bells of the Feelings") and Sv. Rusinov ("Theme for Three Saxophones"), and arrangements of Charles Mingus's "Better 'Git It In Your Soul" and "Green Onions" (credited to "Shtolnberg"). The album ends with a short cooperative "improvisation" (*Improvisatsiya*) featuring the entire ensemble and vocalist Emiliya Markova.

The album is significant not only as a catalogue of Leviev's large-ensemble compositions from that period, but also as a window into the types of repertoire played by the ensemble in its first decade of existence. *EOBRT* consists almost exclusively of original compositions written by members of the orchestra, with titles intended to emphasize the ensemble's "symphonic" orientation. There are only three arrangements of American or British jazz/rock songs covering Mingus, The Beatles, and Motown. The crediting of "Green Onions" to one "Shtolnberg," a name of non-Bulgarian origin, has many possible explanations. One of the most likely is as a reference to or misspelling of Lewie Steinberg, the bass player for Booker T and the MG's from 1962-64 and one of the listed composers for the original song. As mentioned previously, it was common practice during the 1950s and 1960s to change the names of songs and composers in order to hide

[10] The first Balkanton release of the EOBRT was *Estraden Orkestŭr*/Variety Orchestra in 1966, though this was apparently only a 45 RPM recording with two pieces, not a full album like the 1969 release. Leviev appears on the cover of EO/VO, as he was still conductor of the ensemble at the time.

their place of origin to escape censorship from *Estrada*, Balkantourist, or the UBC. Just as often, though, these songs came to Bulgaria via bootleg recordings from neighboring countries with the names of songs and composers misspelled.

Kazasyan's first full year as director of the EOBTR coincided with the peak of jazz production in Bulgaria during the "thaw" of the 1960s. A gala concert at Bulgaria Hall in April by *Jazz Focus '65* is punctuated by a Leviev arrangement of the Philip Kutev Ensemble's most popular work, "Todora is Sleeping" (*Polegnala e Todora*), an interesting symbolic link between state musical professionalism and the burgeoning artistry of the system's most famous alumnus. Trumpeter Raicho Ivanov started the first program on the National Radio devoted exclusively to jazz since WWII in the wake of John Coltrane's death in June, exposing Bulgarian citizens to non-state recordings of jazz and rock through that medium. This first program, on BNR's *Hristo Botev* service, inspired other programs to be launched on sister platforms like Horizontal *(Horizont)* and Orpheus (*Orfei)* later that year (Gadzhev 2010, 502).

Bulgarian jazz groups were also starting to achieve international successes for the first time in the wake of *Jazz Focus '65*'s performance at Montreaux. The EOBRT's tour of the Soviet Union with Milcho Leviev drew attention to the BCP's top state ensemble for pop and jazz. The Vesselin Nikolov Quartet played at Jazz Jamboree '67 in Warsaw, gaining critical acclaim and becoming the second jazz group from Bulgaria to make a splash internationally with music based on folk motifs. The culmination of that summer was *Jazz Focus '65*'s appearance at the 4th International Jazz Festival in Prague. The Prague festival was significant for two important reasons. First, it marked the first time

that Bulgarian aficionados were able to travel *en masse* to a foreign festival and freely speak of their experiences abroad. Several of these experiences, in addition to a write-up of the festival, appeared in the Bulgarian monthly periodical "Pulse" (*Puls*) under the title "Thought, Rhythm, and Harmony" (*Misŭl, ritŭm, i harmoniya*) by Evgenii Stanchev. Second, it was the first opportunity for those same Bulgarians to meet Willis Conover, who appeared at the festival as a guest. The emotional response by musicians and concertgoers to Conover's appearance spoke to the depth of the affection by which he was held for the many citizens of the Eastern Bloc present at the festival (Gadzhev 2010, 228).

The first vestiges of Bulgarian musical tourism at the Prague International Jazz Festival coincided with the political and social liberation in Czechoslovakia popularly known as "Prague Spring." The symbolic meaning in the turn of Czechoslovakia away from the Soviet model of state socialism was understood as a provocation against communist ideology by many of the other leaders in the Bloc. Their response against Prague Spring had consequences for the perpetuation and attitudes about free artistic expression amongst Bulgarians, leading to another round of intense censorship and Party scrutiny toward artists and writers.

PRAGUE SPRING AND THE END OF THE BULGARIAN "THAW"

Zhivkov's reaction to Czechoslovak First Secretary Alexander Dubček's 1968 reforms had profound effects on the relationship between the BCP and Bulgarian artists, including the new wave of jazz musicians establishing themselves through the state

ensembles. After a visit to Prague in April 1968, for example, Zhivkov immediately sent other Bloc leaders a report emphasizing a "very dangerous development of events" and requested an emergency meeting to address the situation. At the May 1968 meeting Zhivkov sided with Brezhnev's position, rejecting moderate proposals to work with the Dubček government and arguing for an immediate and indefinite military occupation (Williams 1997, 114-15). Zhivkov reiterated the position at the Warsaw Summit in July, still the only member present to call for a direct application of force to deal with the situation (ibid. 119). When the Soviet Invasion code named "Operation Danube" was finally launched in August, Zhivkov contributed units of the Bulgarian military to the effort, and he wholeheartedly endorsed the replacement of Dubček with Gustáv Husák in April 1969.

The aftermath of Operation Danube had major ramifications for the Bulgarian artistic intelligentsia in the late-1960s. Prague Spring confirmed Zhivkov and others' worst fears regarding the proliferation of "bourgeois" expression amongst artists, writers, musicians, and youth as well as the role of Western influences in their work. As in Hungary in 1956, artists, writers, and musicians had played a crucial role in the political destiny of Czechoslovakia. These events increased Zhivkov's underlying fears of a similar uprising in Bulgaria, even with the elaborate system of patronage that had been established in order to placate the majority of the artistic intelligentsia.

In addition, Zhivkov was already on guard against subversion based on a 1965 plot to institute a *coup d'etat* from a group of military officers and BCP members. The ringleader, Central Committee member Ivan Todorov-Gorunya, committed suicide in

April after the plot was uncovered. Several others were quietly arrested, as Zhivkov desired to keep the plot quiet in order to perpetuate the image of BCP unity in the face of the public. He did use the plot as justification to further consolidate his authority, sending interior minister Diko Dikov to become Ambassador to Cuba and pulling the Ministries of Interior, Defense, and State Security under his direct control (Krause 2007, 377).

Writers, artists, and musicians with direct connections to Czechoslovakian intellectuals involved in Prague Spring were particularly vulnerable to suspicion. Zhivkov claimed that the disease of intellectual dissonance had been influenced by "Western" ideas and therefore needed to be actively combated. Writer Radoi Ralin, who spoke fluent Czech and personally knew many of the intellectuals involved in Prague Spring from his time living in Prague in 1950, was one of the most famous victims of the increased crackdown on non-ideological intellectual activity during the late-1960s. Never one to adhere to the aesthetic line of the BCP,[11] Ralin came under great scrutiny for the publication of a book of epigrams entitled "Hot Peppers: Folk Epigrams" (*Liuti chushki: narodni epigrami*) in 1968. The book, illustrated by his friend Boris Dimovski, featured a number of poetic rebukes against the BCP and their policies towards artists, writers, and musicians. The epigram that caught the attention of the public was the following: "Silent but still heard! You'll have a full gut, If you keep your mouth shut"

[11] Ralin was fired from his position as contributing writer to the weekly satirical magazine "Hornet" (*Stŭrshel*) in 1961 for publishing parts of a play called "Improvisation" (*Improvizatsiya*), which he co-wrote with colleague Valeri Petrov. The piece, an allegory of the literary "thaw" throughout the Eastern Bloc in the early-1960s, was about an Eskimo who resisted siren voices trying to lure him out of his igloo and toward a "better future." The play was considered by critics to be a devastating critique of communist aesthetic hypocrisy, and was subject to constant rewrites over two years of performances.

(*Times* 2004). The accompanying illustration was of a pig whose curled tail closely resembled Zhivkov's personal signature. After an initial run of publication, a second pressing of 20,000 books was confiscated by the authorities before release and burned in a basement furnace. Ralin was severely rebuked by the BCP, placed under house arrest, and briefly exiled to Silistra. His sudden disappearance prompted fans to mail envelopes of money, flowers, and food to a post office in Sofia, under the impression that he was "starving in a garret" (ibid. 2004).

The BCP was also wary of the role of jazz and popular music in mobilizing young Czechs, and the threat that similar mobilization had toward the efforts taken throughout the decade to mediate affects of bourgeoisness in Bulgarian society.[12] With Sofia set to host the World Festival of Youth and Students in the summer of 1968, the BCP clearly had to redouble efforts to ensure the ethical production and consumption of jazz and popular music amongst Bulgarian citizens. This process wholeheartedly began in April of 1968, when Zhivkov sent an official memo to BTA, BNR, the Concert Directorate, and *Estrada* detailing the need for more vigilance in policing the "obscene, extravagant apparel of artists" appearing on television and in live performances (Gadzhev 2010, 255). As the result of such directives, administrators at *Estrada* heavily scrutinized jazz and

[12] The Jazz Section of Czech Musician's Union was formed in 1971 as a collective (Pehe 1988, 160-1). Throughout the rest of the decade and the early-1980s, the Jazz Section spread its platform to other kinds of musical expression, as well as non-musical political dialogue. The group gained worldwide attention in 1985 after its disbanding by the Czechoslovak government under suspicion of conducting "counterrevolutionary activities," though the group continued to operate despite the ban. Five of the group's leaders were arrested the following year on charges of conducting illegal business practices. In 1987 two leaders were sentenced to prison terms while the others received suspended sentences. The arrests sparked a range of criticism in the West, as writer Kurt Vonnegut and others openly campaigned for the release of the imprisoned Jazz Section leaders.

pop repertoire lists and recordings. Travel to and from Bulgaria for musicians became more difficult, as visa delays and denials again became a common problem, as they were a decade prior. By 1970 the regulations put forth by the Secretariat of the Central Committee had become so stringent that bands often had trouble getting the necessary paperwork filed in a timely fashion for each member. For example, when Teodosii Stoikov replaced Lyubomir Mitsov as bassist in *Jazz Focus '65* that year, he applied for a passport in order to tour with the group and was denied several times. The request was finally granted two days or so after the group's departure date, leaving Stoikov unable to join the rest of the band (ibid. 2010, 257).

The new restrictions on publication and travel made the limitations of the "thaw" toward freedom of expression in the arts painfully clear for many Bulgarian artists, writers, and musicians. The actions of the BCP in supporting the Soviet suppression of Prague Spring in August 1968 spelled the end of any sense of progress in the liberalization of the arts. Markov's reflection on that period is particularly biting, acutely capturing the sense of betrayal that was felt by him and others who had embedded themselves in the socialist artistic apparatus.

> During the four years that divided my first meeting with Todor Zhivkov and my last but one, many things had become clear to me so that I had no more illusions. The naïve, unfounded but vitally necessary faith that internal changes in the Party were possible had perished with the invasion of Czechoslovakia. For many like me, the end of Dubcek was also the end of my attempts to reconcile plainly irreconcilable things, to compromise in the name of something which would never be. The truth about us and our future had emerged with such force that I would have had to be blind, deaf, and dumb not to grasp it. Never before, not even during the most terrible Stalin years, had I felt with such merciless clarity that we were doomed. My memories of the days and nights in the streets of the excited Czech capital, of the liberating force of the Prague Spring, of the intoxication

> which the people in the East did not know and the people in the West had forgotten – all that had changed into repugnance for the regime under which I lived, for its representatives whom I used to meet, and for myself – because the compromises continued. There was something highly offensive in my going to dine with the man who had sent (albeit symbolically) Bulgarian troops into Czechoslovakia. My disillusionment with the career of Todor Zhivkov had started long before August 1968, but the invasion by the Warsaw Pact forces was the watershed, the moment when all the masks were torn off. I understood then that all the actions of the First Party Secretary and his entire social behaviour strictly conformed to the part he was expected to take in the Soviet play entitled *People's Republic of Bulgaria*. Only in a delirium of naïve optimism could one see anything more in his paltry insincere gestures of conciliation, his ambiguous phrases… (Markov 1984, 241).

Markov's ultimate reaction was to immigrate to Great Britain shortly after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, where he spent the next ten years as a dissident abroad. Dissatisfaction became so great that emigration to the West became a more viable option, though the ultimate fates of Markov, Boris Arsov, and others showed the dangers of such flight (see Chapter 2). Many of those that stayed, like Ralin, faced increased pressures from the BCP to once again conform more stringently to the aesthetic platform perpetuated by BCP discourses.

The response from the professional musicians who benefited the most from the artistic *détente* of the early-to-mid 1960s was decidedly mixed. Milcho Leviev continued to compose and tour with *Jazz Focus '65* for most of the next two years. The international contacts he cultivated amongst European musicians abroad between 1965-68 became more numerous, and he started to correspond regularly with American bandleader Don Ellis, sending recordings and discussing the intricacies of rhythm and meter via letter. As international travel and contact became more difficult for Bulgarians in 1969 and 1970, Leviev decided to leave behind the ever-tightening grip of the BCP.

When he received an offer to join the band of trombonist Albert Manglesdorff in West Germany in 1970, he accepted and resigned his commission with the Union of Bulgarian Composers. Upon leaving the country, Leviev was branded a traitor in certain quarters by the BCP. His music was deemed suspect and locked away in the library of the UBC, and he was not permitted to return until an invitation to the Sofia Jazz Festival in 1980. Still, at the time of Leviev's departure, Zhivkov supposedly stated "Leviev didn't run, he went to show the imperialists how to write music. Surely he will return" (Petrov 2008).

Others decided to stay in Bulgaria and make the best of the situation. Fellow *Jazz Focus '65* member and frequent EOBRT guest soloist Simeon Shterev enjoyed limited international success during this period, mostly based on his travels with *Jazz Focus'65* during the 1960s. The magazine "Jazz Forum" named him the top jazz flautist in Europe from 1969-71. Shterev also became one of Bulgaria's first jazz educators at the university level, when he was commissioned to teach flute and improvisation at the newly formed jazz and pop studies program at the State Academy of Music in 1969 (Gadzhev 2010, 503). Plovdiv native Vesselin Nikolov, a saxophonist and composer greatly influenced by John Coltrane's modal compositions and religious music from Bulgaria's medieval period, continued to enhance his career as well. His band *Red, White, and Green* was commissioned to regularly perform with the Plovdiv State Philharmonic. He also conducted the first concert tour of Bulgaria with Western European jazz musicians – Dutch pianist Jack Van Pol and Belgian bassist Freddie Deronde – in 1973 (ibid. 504).

By the early-1970s, the BCP's reaction to Prague Spring waned slightly in the wake of the ratification of the 1971 constitution and Soviet Premier Leonid Brezhnev's

policy of *détente* toward the Western powers.[13] In 1974, the Union of Music Workers reopened the jazz club in Sofia that had been closed since 1967. The first "jazz festival" in Bulgaria was held in Yambol that summer, making up for a similar festival that was cancelled in 1968. An impromptu jam session was held at the "Golden Orpheus" (*Zlatni Orfei*) pop music festival in Varna featured a constellation of Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian musicians playing together for the first time: Cubans Chucho Valdes, Arturo Sandoval, and Paquito D'Rivera, French trombonist Andre Paquinet, American saxophonist Leo Wright and members from the West Berlin Big Band, the EOBRT, and *Sofia Orchestra* (Gadzhev 2010, 505-6). Never before had such an amalgamation of musicians from different places gathered to play on Bulgarian soil.

Though the events cited above seemingly point toward a renewed movement toward the relative openness pre-Prague Spring, I argue that they were more a product of jazz finally becoming absorbed into the BCP's project of ethical subject construction. The reason is simple – jazz was no longer considered to be a capitalist outlier by the aesthetic discourse of the BCP. Jazz musicians were now working within the system of musical professionalism exclusively, and thus were considered *part* of that system. They were now, in the eyes of the BCP, the very embodiment of ethical socialist citizens.

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[13] The ratification of the July 1971 Bulgarian Constitution outlined policy reducing Turkish, Roma, and other ethnic minorities to the status of "citizens of non-Bulgarian origin," it also made a Bulgarian national identity one of the driving forces of the construction of the socialist state (Ludwikowski 1996, Eminov 1997, Koinova 2003). The constitution also served as a mechanism to further centralized authority into the hands of top Party members. Zhivkov relinquished his position as Prime Minister to become chairman of the new State Council (*Dŭrzhaven cŭvet*), which acted as legislative body between Parliamentary sessions as well as keeping sole executive authority. The constitution also expressly stated the role of the BCP as the "leading force in the country," a clause that was conspicuously absent from the Dimitrov constitution of 1949 (Krause 2007, 378; Crampton 2007, 358).

In an ironic twist, the dalliances with *vnye* as a kind of boredom in the 1960s in Leviev's compositions, for example, gave way to a new and peculiar kind of communist *blasé* in the 1970s and 1980s. This communist *blasé* was one in which musicians could now engage with jazz openly because it was considered less threatening by the BCP. Projects like the Simeon Shterev Quartet of the late-1970s and Vesselin Nikolov's *Jazz Line* (*Dzhaz liniya*) thrived under this state of affairs. State ensembles like the EOBRT and *Sofia Orchestra* continued to record and tour. Young musicians like *kaval* (an end-blown folk flute) musician Teodosii Spassov began to realize the potential of the "inexhaustible resource" of Bulgarian folklore in its hybridization with other local and foreign styles under the umbrella of ethno-jazz. Balkanton even began releasing a series of compilation albums called "Jazz Panorama" starting in 1972, featuring American and European artists whose music was never before released (officially) in Bulgaria. As Vladimir Gadzhev wrote, the decades following the 1960s were marked by the BCP "finally overcoming the diverse malice" of previous years (Gadzhev 2001, 34).

Missing, though, was the essence and promise of artistic expression in the 1960s, what Leviev referred to as "the most creative years of the century" (Levy 2007a, 26). The relative disillusionment amongst artists after 1968 perpetuated a different kind of stagnation than that which plagued jazz in Bulgaria in the late-1940s and early 1950. The *blasé* that set in amongst jazz musicians in the early-1970s was one in which the potential for free expression desired and hoped for during the 1960s dissolved into an everyday of bureaucratic negotiation. In putting forth their own most creative periods, EOBRT, *Jazz Focus '65*, and *Red, White, and Green* had shown once and for all that jazz was not

mutually exclusive from the ideal socialist subject. Musicians could successfully negotiate the codes and boundaries laid out in the BCP's aesthetic policy *and* play the West's devilish "bourgeois" music. Thus, the events of the 1960s, while cementing jazz's place within communist Bulgarian life, ironically further disconnected Bulgarian musicians from the rest of the Europe.

Nowhere was this kind *blasé* better articulated than in the words of the musicians themselves. Vesselin Nikolov, for instance, was asked in an interview why he left *Red, White, and Green* in 1983 after serving as the band's creative director for over fifteen years. Nikolov's reply emphasized how utterly integrated the group had become within the communist milieu.

> I had problems with the party-administrative management in Plovdiv…. After a person reaches a level, he can't be content with that which has been done….He wants to go upwards. My problem was with Ivan Panev. He was first secretary of the Regional Pary Committee. So it happens that on a tour in the Soviet Union he received a memo that our group is not accredited….And I went before him and like a director of the city I wanted to be granted some kind of sum of the sample fair, for we can purchase a group accredidation. He says that it is better paid with a bull for breeding. I said "Thanks!" and I left. Hence came about the request for departure from *Red, White, and Green* (Docheva 1998).

Nikolov's account, in its own way, echoes Markov's evisceration in his memoir of the BCP's olive branch toward artists, writers, and musicians during the 1960s. Whereas Markov speaks directly of the epistemic and philosophical impact of post-Prague Spring aesthetic policy in Bulgaria, Nikolov voices the everyday consequences of the BCP's turnabout. Also striking are the similarities to Liana Antonova's account in Chapter 2, implying that musicians were still dealing with the same kinds of problems in 1983 as they did in 1953. What the passage most astutely captures, however, is the sense

of inevitability regarding the rhythmic repetitions of bureaucratic interference. With the increased opportunities to play jazz in the early-1970s came the responsibility to dialogue with the BCP's aesthetic handlers constantly, the tradeoff for concerts, grants, recordings, and constant employment. Very few alternative avenues existed outside of the rock and punk scenes that, by the mid-1970s, had far more popularity amongst youth willing to place themselves outside of communist influence. In addition, the already small number of elite musicians playing jazz during the 1960s was decimated by emigration to the West, leaving those who stayed in Bulgaria little recourse but to work within the system as best as possible. All of these social particularities were influential in the perpetuation of the *blasé* attitude influential on many musicians throughout the rest of the communist period and after 1989, when the question of "is there Bulgarian jazz" became most pertinent.

Clearly, the actions and events of the 1960s were instrumental in defining the role and permissibility of jazz in Bulgaria for the remainder of the communist period. Though the expressive momentum created by groups like the EOBRT and *Jazz Focus '65* ground to a halt by the early-1970s, the seeds were planted for jazz to finally secure a place in communist Bulgaria as something other than "bourgeois" expression. Nevertheless, the institutionalization of jazz accomplished little in terms of opening avenues of artistic expression similar to those imagined by Bulgarians to exist in the capitalist world. With regard to jazz, Zhivkov's dream of the conscious, socialist subject that could engage with Western objects without succumbing to cognitive dissonance had seemingly come to

fruition. Jazz, the *libratory* American music, had finally become part of the mechanisms that had undermined the bourgeois lifestyle in Bulgaria after 1944.

PART II

Chapter 4: Urban Life, Urbane Desires: Boredom, Subjectivity, and Playing Jazz in Post-Communist Sofia

> *Boredom epitomizes the dilemma of the autonomous modern subject, for whom enlightenment has also meant fragmentation….if rationality is the sustaining myth of modernity, boredom, as an everyday experience of universalized skepticism, constitutes its existential reality (Goodstein 2005, 3-4).*

I recall a December 2008 performance by famed pianist Milcho Leviev and Vicki Almazidu, a Greek vocalist born in Bulgaria who frequently performs with Leviev during his visits. Located just off of Slaveikov Square in central Sofia, *Social Jazz Club* had a reputation as one of the most popular spots for live performance in the city and was a frequent stop for American and European R&B, blues, and jazz acts passing through Sofia. American bassist Marcus Miller played there in 2007 as part of a European tour. Gospel/jazz/blues vocalist Janice Harrington has played the venue several times, in 2007 and again in 2009, during her series of workshops and concerts as a cultural envoy set up through the US Embassy.

Prior to the start of the first set, I wandered throughout the establishment, taking in the veritable hodgepodge of images casting "jazz" within the body of an anesthetizing bourgeois leisure: red velvet curtains adorning the doorways and stage backdrop; neon versions of a trumpet and a violin on each side of the bar; black leather couches sitting against the wall to the left of the stage. What caught my attention most, however, was the piano, a white-bodied baby grand piano that, upon closer inspection, was not *actually* a

piano at all. Rather, it was the *body* of a piano, stripped of all internal mechanisms, including the keys. In the gap where there would normally be keys sat an electric keyboard, patched into an amplifier sitting at the base of the piano shell. Perhaps wishing to maintain the illusion of the apparatus as a *real* piano, the instrument was turned away from the audience at such an angle that maw that held the keyboard itself was hidden unless closely inspected. Leviev, displaying his reputed quick wit and good humor, simply laughed and told a quick joke about the piano that I failed to catch. Watching Leviev play on such an instrument reminded me of Charlie Parker being forced to play a plastic alto saxophone for a concert at Toronto's Massey Hall in 1955 because he forgot to bring an instrument with him on the trip – one of the great myths of jazz lore involving the modern improvising subject transcending the material objects forced upon him by circumstance.

While the white-bodied piano at *Social Jazz Club* is quite possibly, following Deleuze, a body-without-organs incarnate, the piano also carried an allegorical status – putting on display the emptiness that the commodity image perpetuates in the Sofian club. The electric keyboard, historically cast in some circles as an inauthentic intruder into the jazz canon, adorns a costume so as to fit in with the rest of the commodity spectacle. In doing so, however, the piano becomes a spectacle unto itself, as if the electric keyboard is given an ornate mask to fit in with the other attendees of a commodity masquerade. The faux piano's function was ultimately mimetic – to conjure a certain notion of bourgeois leisure that provides very valuable social capital amongst the patrons of venues like *Social Jazz Club*. As if the presence of the electric keyboard –

the black shell, streamlined circuits, and plastic keys – shattered the illusion the owners of the space were trying to create for *Social*, they created another illusion for the patrons in the form of a hollow piano.

My interest in this piano goes beyond the phantasmagoric oddity. The piano also presents a strong and lasting image that points to one of the most glaring difficulties for the production of jazz in contemporary Sofia. Playing under the atmosphere of a market economy, the consequences for musicians that spawn from the disjuncture between clubs and venues as businesses and havens of commodity imagery, and the practice of improvised music and jazz's historical narrative of resistance toward those very things within the political economy of jazz are profound. The paradigmatic shift in the professionalization of music in Bulgaria under capitalism has affected the production of and spaces open to jazz and jazz-influenced improvised music like *ethno-jazz* and *wedding music*.

Social Jazz Club offers an excellent example of how jazz becomes embedded within this entire commodity apparatus of the venue in post-communist Sofia. Perhaps more than any other club that I saw during my time there, *Social* appropriated "jazz" as a commodified aesthetic by saturating the club space with objects referential to a middle-class cosmopolitan sensibility. Essentially, *Social* was a simulacrum of a "jazz club" combined with the trappings of a contemporary European *discotheque*.

This chapter frames the production of jazz within the broader context of the subjective experience of modernity in post-communist Bulgaria. More specifically, I explore the state of jazz musicians in Sofia after the collapse of the communist regime in

1989, and how the end of the communist system created an environment in which musicians, inexorably tied to the fate of music professionalism in an unstable market economy, have had to employ multi-faceted strategies in order to maintain careers. I explore this through discourse of "boredom," which since the 19th century has been seen as both a symptom of modern travails and as a space of distanciation through which the subject can recover oneself. Boredom is pertinent and useful, I argue, because the collapse of the highly-regimented socio-cultural apparatus of the communist regime ushered in an era of rapid democratic and capitalist reform that turned the experience of the everyday into a negotiation of fragmented images and spaces. For musicians, market reform and withdrawal of government support for music created a dearth of locales for the performance of creative, non-commercial music, particularly any form associated with jazz. Those that did not emigrate to the "greener pastures" of Western Europe developed an entirely new set of strategies for surviving within this environment, whilst carving out spaces through which individual expression could be fostered. Two of these strategies are particularly apropos, both of which are different modes of enacting boredom through jazz production as subjective recovery. One is the adoption of a peculiar, self-deprecating rhetoric amongst local musicians toward any notion of "Bulgarian jazz." The other is a reconceptualization of jazz "standards," often cast as the quintessential form of abstracted musical labor (i.e. gig tunes) in creative improvisation circles, as the keys to creating spaces in Sofia acceptable to improvised music and thus subjective musical expression.

To fully understand this, we must first examine the long history of the discourse on boredom within the confines of modernity. In particular, I explore the application of boredom as a way to historically understand the rationalizations necessary to shield the subject from the cacophony of modern urban space. More specifically to Bulgaria, boredom constitutes a response to the fracturing and reorganization of urban space and social relations that occurred within the creation of a capitalist *metropolis* in the early-1990s. Exploring boredom as a part of the material history of the 19th century as mapped out in the works of Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin, and the role of boredom in the historical anxiety over negotiation of urban spaces, can give a clearer picture of the Sofia that musicians have experienced since 1989. By this, I mean the enactment of an experiential frame through which we can better understand the relationship between the cooptation of space and time through capitalism and the strategies of integration and resistance undertaken by musicians and the historically-charged aesthetic subjectivity embedded within jazz practices.

BOREDOM AND THE ACTUALIZATION OF THE URBAN SUBJECT

Since appearing in Blaise Pascal's 1658 treatise *Pensées*, boredom has figured prominently in the ongoing conceptualization of the modern subject in European philosophy and critical thought.[1] Boredom is part of a language that expresses the darker shades of experience in the living subject within the greater discourses on modernity. At various points boredom has been perceived as a state of being perched on the brink of

[1] For an excellent survey of boredom and its various historical conceptualizations, see Lamarche 1999.

sheer nihilism and therefore quite dangerous, but also as a space of reflection and critical retreat that was a necessary consequence of enlightened subjectivity.[2] For a while, then, boredom became one of the most important tools in theorizing modernity and the subject precisely because it provided a language with which to delve into the depths of human experience.

By the beginning of WWI, the gradual bifurcation of boredom through various discourses of idealist philosophy and existentialism on one hand, and material history on the other, though, had robbed boredom of the critical voice carried throughout most of the 19th century. The inability to reconcile each perspective within the realm of the "enlightened skepticism" that is shared by both fractured the discourse on boredom to the point where it was no longer viable to instill boredom as a universal experience couched within the realm of *a priori* knowledge. Barbara Goodstein explains that:

> the discourse on boredom evolved in such a way as to efface the historical specificity of this way of conceiving of subjective malaise. By the late 19th century, there were two predominant modes of interpreting the experience – as a primarily subjective or fundamentally objective problem….[T]hese should be understood as constitutive, complementary dimensions of the discourse as a whole. Thus the enlightened skepticism that is boredom's historical condition of possibility is the common ground of both the existentialist interpretation of boredom as an encounter with the ultimate senselessness of existence and the

[2] The actual methods of dealing with boredom as potentially destructive to the modern subject have been debated considerably. Kant was one of the first to suggest that boredom could (and must) be dealt with through the preponderance of daily activities to occupy the mind as the subject lives and grapples with the world. Martin Heidegger, on the other hand, saw in the idleness of boredom the complete loss of meaning on a fundamental level, and the attempt to anesthetize the self through occupations, and particularly with technology, to be boredom's most dangerous attribute. Boredom, for Heidegger, could not simply be avoided and or put to the side. It needed to be confronted and ontologically questioned so that qualities as a "mute fog" could be minimized and the subject could continue his being-in-the-world, to borrowed one of Heidegger's most famous concepts. Or, as Leslie Theile suggests, "Boredom, even profound boredom, is an unavoidable part of human being. It evidences our capacity to experience the nothingness of Being, even if only in the mode of turning away from it….the challenge is not to escape or suppress boredom but to overcome it" (Thiele 1997, 509).

> anthropological notion that boredom signifies an unfilled need for purposive activity. However, neither the philosophical nor social scientific approaches incorporate methodological awareness of their positions in the discourse on boredom. Instead, they generate circular self-justifications (Goodstein 2005, 405).

At this point boredom became tied to everyday experience and historical specificity. For this reason the city frequently appears as a trope through which boredom appears as a side effect, a malaise directly tied to the alienation embedded within Western modernity. In particular, boredom's pernicious relationship to the rise of modern technology and the pervasive, blanketing nature of urban space in the mid-to-late 19th century were of particular interest to a new generation of writers who came of age post-1848. The profound alienation ruminated upon by these early writers of urban life in the form of a "shock" brought upon by the sheer masses of people moving and crowding the city, and the overwhelming gothic cement of the buildings that channeled the movements of those masses. This notion of "shock" was, as Veit Erlmann so profoundly shows, felt by both colonizer and colonized alike in the 19th century, albeit from entirely different perspectives.[3]

Although the vast majority of voices here were from the cradle of Western Europe, a vibrant and Germanic-influenced post-Liberation literature also began to

[3] See Erlmann 1999, Chapter 3. Erlmann outlines this perspective from the travel diaries of black South African Josiah Semouse on an 1887 musical tour that finished in London, where urban London as the space of empire was so alienating for Semouse that it was beyond description, such that his entry on London was by far the shortest of his entries. This is briefly juxtaposed with mention of Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*, which is used as an example of how the city was no more transparent to the Victorians who lived and built London. Ultimately, Semouse's silence is used as an indicator that "metropolitan interpretations of its own modernisms as universals….fails to recognize the specific conditions under which writers from the periphery could not conceive of modernity other than as a move away from the narrow world of colonial oppression, racism, and slavery toward some more general and ultimately more egalitarian form of community….history was no longer going to be written from one center but from many different places" (Erlmann 1999, 85).

critique the capitalist metropolis as well. Aleko Konstantinov was an important Bulgarian voice in this discourse. An author/adventurer, Kostantinov was one of the key figures in the post-liberation gaze toward Europe amongst a burgeoning Bulgarian intelligentsia. His writings about his visit to the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893, detailed at length in Chapter 1, allude to the simultaneous wonder and revulsion with crowds and modern rhythms seen in writings by Charles Baudelaire about the city. As Mary Neuberger demonstrates, Aleko:

> describes how impressed he is from the moment he boards a transatlantic liner. Upon arriving in New York he is awed by the bank buildings, which 'put the European palaces to shame.' But without a doubt he is most astounded by the imposing pavilions and exhibits of the Chicago fair about which he elaborates at length. In spite of his bedazzlement, however, somewhere along the way disillusionment creeps in….[He] wearies of the pace of American cities, 'the mad motion, of the railways, ships, and trams….and those worried faces….those silent lips, already unable to smile. So cold!....But when will we live?'….But the climax of his disillusionment comes when he visits the Chicago slaughterhouses – a popular tourist destination at the time. The stench of the dead pigs is so putrid and overpowering that Aleko almost throws up several times and nearly loses consciousness….Aleko comes to a familiar conclusion, that material progress does not bring moral advancement (Neuburger 2006, 436).

In his statements above, Aleko clearly states that capitalism itself does not bring the ethics of liberalism that supposedly dictate free and fair behavior, especially in an organism as complex as the city. What is remarkable about this statement is the mirroring of the perpetual self-reflexive reorientation that so fervently occupied not only Baudelaire, but other writers like Edgar Allen Poe and Joseph Conrad. Aleko's perspective was common at a time when the idea of a modern subjectivity was very much in doubt to the minds of other Europeans, as evident in writings as divergent as travelogues by British citizens visiting the region, to the writings of liberal Prime

Minister William Gladstone about the state of Balkan subjects both before and after the Russo-Turkish War of 1878.[4]

As I argued in Chapter 1, Konstantinov's writings show that the development of the ethical implications of the modern city were very much on the mind of the burgeoning Bulgarian intelligentsia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These writings provide an important historical and ontological dimension that allows us to tie boredom and urban space as relevant to the development of post-communist Sofia. within the transition from socialism to capitalism in Sofia, there have been many similarities in the remapping of spaces, commodity values, and social relations that speak toward some of this early writing that jockeys with reconceptualizing meaning within modernity and the exact place of the subject within the space of the city. By the late-1980s, Sofia had become not only the largest city in Bulgaria, but also *the* Bulgarian city – its central hub of government, culture, and social norms. Donna Buchanan notes that in discussing Sofia, most of her friends "glossed anything outside the capital as "the provinces" (*provintsiyata*) even when the location in question was a major city like Plovdiv or Burgas" (Buchanan 2006, 40).

Even though this transition toward becoming *the* Bulgarian city started before the transition, the erosion of communist hegemony had already begun through the adoption of *perestroika* and *glastnost* from a liberalizing Soviet Union. The gradual upheaval in communist social order forced questions of subjective meaning to the surface that had

[4] For a detailed overview and critique of British travelogues in the Balkans, see Hammond 2004, 601-624. Excerpts from Gladstone's speeches about the independence movements in various Balkan countries can be found in Gladstone 2010, 159. For a critique of Gladstone's motives and changing opinions about Balkan subjects and their relationships to the Ottoman Empires, see Todorova 1997, 98-99.

been ideologically suppressed for years, and a certain rethinking of what involved a subjective becoming in post-communist Sofia. Specifically, questions about individual *relationships* to Sofia as a site of everyday life became more and more relevant, and this accelerated in the years immediately following 1989. Urban geography was in a constant state of flux through the opening of private enterprises, the alteration of neighborhoods, and improvements to public works such as more efficient mass transit systems.

After years of relatively stagnant growth at 1.2 million people, Sofia's population began to grow during the economic crises that plagued the country during the mid 1990s, many coming in droves from the countryside in search of work (Hirt and Stanilov 2007, 220). The influx of labor, coupled with the selling of property to Bulgarian private developers for the first time, meant that both the social relationships and the *look* of Sofia were in a state of flux, and changing at a rapid rate. To place some figures on the exact toll of this change, up to 40 percent of formerly residential space in the center has been cleared since the early-1990s, displacing around 50,000 residents from homes in central Sofia and replacing the space with commercial redevelopment like restaurants, clubs, and stores (ibid. 222). These locales, of course, catered to both foreigners and a newly and upwardly mobile professional class living outside of the center and clogging the ill-equipped streets and sidewalks with automobiles of all types, making walking through the city particularly difficult.

Revitalization aside, the reality of this change was that the agents responsible for and profiting by much of this were the *nomenklatura* and the mafia, and some studies on the Bulgarian economy after 1989 have suggested that placing these two parties in

advantageous positions during the early part of the transition was the only means of securing their peaceful cooperation.[5] Their successes (and subsequent abuses) ignited a deep-seeded pessimism amongst those who were subject to the price fixing, inflation, and rationing of public utilities that came to define the early-1990s. The blame for this poor economic transition mirrored, perhaps ironically, some of the criticisms directed toward Bulgarians throughout the mid-to-late 19th and early 20th centuries in terms of their capability to function as modern subjects. Jeffery Miller, drawing upon Max Weber, argues that the economic failures of the early-1990s were due to the lack of discipline in curbing the self-interested behavior that affect liberal free markets (Miller 1998, 124). Again, these failures clearly point to a transition from the power of social capital that dominated the communist period over to the free market mechanisms that were responsible for reshaping every aspect of Bulgarian society after 1989, including musical production and consumption.

In other words, the transition in Sofia from communist modernity to capitalist modernity immediately after 1989 is an "origin" in the fractured, unstable way held by both Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin. Origin, here, presents a continuum in which the word is not merely a beginning, or a genesis, but a restructuring of practice and ideas out of the decaying order of old. "[It] is not a kernel out of which traditions and practices are born and become actualized and set. It is always the site through which elements of a prior existence gradually disappear, and elements of something new take

[5] See Ganev 2007, 64-65 for a detailed exploration of the various perspectives on the *nomenklatura* as either a hindrance or a necessity to the transition to capitalism in post-communist countries.

hold and immediately begin to decay and dissolve themselves" (Lamarche 1999, 206). Following this logic, the supposed "origin" of post-communist Bulgaria was a gradual metamorphosis from old power structures and social relations into newer, capitalist ones. The BCP's restructuring into the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) immediately after 1989 and taking parliamentary control by 1996 is an example of this transformation within the political sphere. In the social and economic sphere, this transition is evident in power that commodity fetishism held in Sofian social spaces, as something fugitive under communism that was now liberated and desired as a sign of capitalist modernity.

The rhetoric of boredom becomes an important analytical language here because it presents an important and often overlooked perspective on how the subject deals with this overlapping of fractured structures in the everyday, and what kinds of coping mechanisms are enacted in response. It is necessary to understand this rhetoric and how I see boredom's presence in the practices of jazz musicians in Sofia in the post-communist period, understanding the transition in the discourse about boredom from a language of *experiential reflection* to a language that *reflects experience*, charting the gradual dissolution of the modern subject in the city, becomes necessary. Subjects adapt themselves to alienating environments by strategies of adaptation in the face of the perceived dissolution of subjective experience and older systems of knowledge, reflection, and experience. Boredom, as I argue throughout the rest of this chapter, provides the subject with ways to pull his/herself out of the alienation of modern life and reorient themselves within the new orders of knowledge and experience.

The dynamics of such a transition in the European city were first outlined in the early-20th century through the works of German sociologist Georg Simmel and Walter Benjamin. In different ways, each marks the beginnings of possibility for an ontology of the Western city that explains the role that boredom plays in the everyday experience of urban life. Most of all, each one's conceptualization of urban life within modernity elucidates ways in which the grey blanket of boredom, the pristine alienation of the subject from desire and memory, is actually refolded into a kind of subjective recovery through types of reflective isolation. This point is most important for when we return to post-communist Sofia, and will be elucidated on at length later in this chapter. Sofia's gradual emergence as a European city in the years since 1878, a process explored at length in this dissertation, link the Bulgarian capital into the epistemological crises seen in the European metropolis throughout the 20th century.

Simmel and the "Metropolitan Man"

Georg Simmel's turn-of-the century writings provide a valuable perspective on the development of the modern city, the co-optation of time and space, and the impacts of such co-optation on subjective experience. Both *The Metropolis and Mental Life* (1903) and *Philosophy of Money* (1907) attempt to posit an early phenomenology of urban life, and the ways in which the subject must negotiate the homogeneity of the city and the mechanisms of commodity exchange and labor alienation. The importance of these works ultimately lies in their attempt to connect boredom as a state of abstract subjective

reflection to the everyday rhythms, the "*intensification of nervous stimulation*" that defines the metropolis (Simmel 1990, 410).

For Simmel, the prevailing subjective mode of modern urban life was what he termed "intellectuality," a particular kind of ordered, rhythmic engagement that shielded the subject from the shock of interior and exterior stimuli, such as the urban crowds so feared by Charles Baudelaire.[6] The pervasiveness of the money economy dominated metropolitan life and abstracted social interactions within the sphere of commodity exchange. As the rhythms of the city became more and more pervasive (and invasive), the more calculating the subject had to become as a coping response. Simmel framed these rhythms through the image of the pocket watch, the one object indispensable to the city dwelling subject to keeping the system stable. Without the seamless, ordering of rhythms that the pocket watch made transparent, the machine of modern life broke down and descended into chaos. Or, as Simmel practically stated, "if all clocks and watches in Berlin would suddenly go wrong in different ways, even if only by one hour, all economic life and communication of the city would be disrupted for a long time" (ibid. 412). Thus, the city self-replicated its own social order by increasing the chains of social interactions and organization required for the accoutrement of daily needs. It became an "endless succession of particular, localized means," the reasons for such organization were ultimately lost to the inhabiting subjects (Goodstein 2005, 258-59).

[6] Baudelaire's perspective on modernity, the city, and its crowds can be found in several essays such as "The Painter in Modern Life." See Baudelaire 1992, 395-406.

The key to resisting the intensity of urban rhythms, of enacting and alternative mode of the subjective, was through the experience of the *blasé*, or the result of a "boundless pursuit of pleasure [that] agitates the nerves to such violent responses to their strongest reactivity for such a long time that they finally cease to react at all" (Simmel 1990, 413). Within the experience of *blasé* there existed a homogeneity where no experience stood out from others, constituting a conditioned anesthetization from the city's own homogeneous rhythms of capitalism. *Blasé* also extended into the very nature of everyday social interactions, where the sheer volume of the crowd required a kind of antipathy in the ways subjects interacted with each other, never going beyond that which satisfied the commodified homogeneity of the urban.

The act of being *blasé* toward both the city's relentless life rhythms and toward the people that mutually inhabited these spaces, Simmel argued, enacted a particular kind of personal freedom that is distinct to the social relations of the metropolis. Though there was an ontology that links the formation of this individuality with smaller spaces and social circles, only within the city could a freedom of movement potentially grow into itself. The price, though, was a personal alienation necessary to function within the vast everyday of the metropolis. As Veit Erlmann suggests in his work on the history of aurality and subject formation, Simmel saw the adaptation of the subject to the city's rhythmic embrace as a quintessential deal with the Devil. Urban selves traded the certainty of "natural" rhythm constituting subjectivity as a "unified whole" for the uncertainty of a fractured of rhythmic symmetry via artificial mechanisms of time. An example of such an artificial mechanism was the electric light, which eliminated the

difference between day and night. The co-optation of personal rhythm by the urban milieu, Erlmann argues, committed a form of violence on subjects insofar that their voices could only be heard when in "synchronicity with the fixed scheme" (Erlmann 2010, 280).

Simmel's formulation of the subject was far from utopian in this regard, but his ideas were quite significant for contextualization of a productive boredom within modern life. Unlike Heidegger's "mute fog" and many other early-20th century attitudes toward boredom, Simmel's *blasé* offered the possibility for boredom as a subject position without the mortal dangers of personal nihilism. Simmelian *blasé* represented a potential reestablishment of reflection that the city obscures, and leaves open a space for resistance against the nervous overload of the senses feared in conjunction with the metropolis.

Although Simmel's "metropolitan man" was essentially an abstract figure based on a problematic set of universalisms, he represented an important perspective on the formation and continuation of the modern subject within the city.[7] Most importantly, he established the possibility of boredom as libratory by through grounding within the subjective reaction to his/her external stimuli and environment, as opposed to older notions that placed boredom completely at the whim of the subjective milieu. Boredom as something potentially libratory, or as a type of resistance against modernity's blinding pace, were concepts elaborated upon later in the work of Benjamin. His conceptualization of boredom, and its place in his non-representational history of

[7] In her analysis of Simmel's work, Goodstein also recognizes his contribution to the creation of an analytical language about boredom in which the metaphorical language of reflection has been shaped in part by the physical and psychological experiences of modernity inherent in metropolitan life.

commodity production and the city took the notion of boredom as subjective resistance in another direction apropos to contextualizing the issues post-communist Sofia.

Benjamin and the Baudelarian *Flâneur*

Like Simmel, Benjamin's writings on boredom dealt with the copious affects of urban space on the subject. But what was for Simmel an abstract "metropolis" that devoured time and space with its commodity-driven sense of rhythm, was for Benjamin someplace far more historically and experientially distinct – 19th century Paris. Casting Paris as the urban origin of modernity was a trope that persisted through much of Benjamin's mature work, especially his unfinished magnum opus *The Arcades Project* from which his chapter on boredom is drawn. Benjamin's writings on the city were nothing less than an attempt to view the growing power of the commodity in Western society through the lens of material history – in other words, building the "original *temple* of commodity capitalism" (Lamarche 1999, 213).

Paris was important for Benjamin as an example of the first historical case for seeing the *metropolis* as a space through which to restructure the entire way of thinking about the experience of every life within modernity. This restructuring was linked to the urban renewal projects of Baron Hausmann during the onset of Napoleon III's second French Empire that attempted to reconfigure the urban landscape of Paris whilst keeping the existing social conditions intact and creating the illusion of a new egalitarian city. As Susan Buck-Morss explains in her massive analysis of *The Arcades Project* entitled *Dialectics of Seeing*,

> Hausmann's slum clearance simply broke up working-class neighborhoods and moved the eyesores and health hazards of poverty out of central Paris and into the suburbs. His system of public parks and 'pleasure grounds' provided the illusion of social equality, while behind the scenes his building projects initiated a boom capitalists with public funds….In fact the plan, based on a politics of imperial centralization, was totalitarian aesthetics, in that it caused 'the repression of every individualistic part, every autonomous development' of the city, creating an artificial city where the Parisian…. 'no longer feels at home…The true goal of Hausmann's works was securing the city against civil war' (Buck-Morss 1989, 89-90; c.f. Benjamin 1999, 189).

The arcades, which had been a part of Parisian urban life since the 1820s, became implicated in this illusion insofar that those spaces "created a world of dreams and wishes to calm and steady the rootless masses" (Lamarche 1999, 218). More directly, the enclosed arcades – separated from the busy streets, the printing presses, the slaughterhouses, the factories – presented commodities in an environment abstracted from their means of production, and thus world of co-opted time and space that defined the rhythms of the *metropolis* for Simmel. The possibility for the "development of an urban tradition" lied within the arcades as a site through which the masses could purchase the objects of their own manual production – an ultimate form of labor alienation.

The true power of the arcades, however, lay not only in their wholesale adoption of the commodity-as-object, but their role in changing the nature of modern experience. Embedded within their very architecture, Benjamin argued, the arcades had made commodity fetishism the prevailing mode of experience in the city under modernity. With this fetishism carried the side effect of enacting nothing less than the *degradation of experience* that was exemplified the magic of the commodity of the city replacing traditional practices from outside of it. As Lamarche explains:

> To speak of a *degradation* of experience is to imply a transition from a more 'solid' coherent and hence assimilable kind of experience, to a more transitory, fragmented, chaotic and hence less easily assimilable one. This sort of transition is a significant aspect of Benjamin's analysis of the degradation of modern experience….This degradation takes place within a historical context of the transition from experiences grounded in particular traditions and practices characteristic of life in provincial towns and rural areas, to those which are grounded in modern city life. The latter transition/degradation is undergone by the 'mass' that migrates from province to city. It does not presuppose….the existence of a more 'authentic' way of life that is being lost, through absorption into a less authentic one" (ibid. 231-32).

Degradation does not necessarily imply a negation of experience, and to cast degradation as such posits that authentic modes of experience in their perceived homogeneity carry more value than the fractured, heterogeneous modes enacted within the city. But the quality of the urban experience does require the subject to develop new ways of perceiving and, ultimately, dealing with this space internally. Benjamin himself saw this as a process of the city dweller "deflect[ing] these [fractured experiences] into her unconsciousness ….becom[ing] consciously indifferent to them" (Benjamin 1999, 104). The commodities that litter the arcades become imbricated within the process of deflection of hopes and wishes, insofar that their magical qualities push the "hopes and dreams of the masses" into the subconscious as well, where hopes and dreams were perpetually deferred (Lamarche 1999, 265).

In this deflection boredom functioned as a side effect of the heterogeneous, fractured quality of the city – a mood that simultaneously outlined both the comfort and alienation that Benjamin saw in modern experience. "Boredom," he stated, "is a warm grey fabric lined on the inside with the most lustrous and colorful of silks…. But the sleeper looks bored and grey within his sheath" (Benjamin 1999, 106). Boredom served

as an "index of the collective sleep" of the masses – a catalogue of dreams either perceived to be lost or that never really existed, but that were constantly hinted at for the alienated through the power of the commodity. In this way the negative connotations of boredom are perpetuated through the association with sleeping, indicating a lack of actualizing the qualities that define subjective engagement – judgment, desire, for example.

Benjamin's notion of boredom becomes most distinct from the boredom of Heidegger and Simmel in his conceptualization of the Baudelairian *flâneur*. The *flâneur* was the embodiment of subjective resistance to modernity's charms, able to weave in and out of the city's homogeneity and maintain some level of detachment. Derived from the French verb *flâner*, meaning "to stroll," the *flâneur* became the agent through which Charles Baudelaire contextualized the anxieties of urban life. Always standing on the "outside," utilizing a particularly French version of *vnye*, the *flâneur* negotiated Parisian social life through his eyes and his actions.

Lamarche analyzes the *flâneur* from an ontological perspective, noting that as an agent the *flâneur* remained an integral part of the visceral reality of urban life, even has he tried to distance himself from the city's wiles and charms.

> [The *flâneur*] represents the 'intelligentsia' in an 'in between phase,' exterior to but familiarizing itself with the market place….partaking of [the crowd's] life and experience, but consciously so; full aware of his own position as observer from within, he thus remains outside of it as well….[he] has no interest in the bourgeois interior of the salons and exclusive clubs, he tarries in the crowd and joins in their pleasures and sorrows. But neither does he lose himself….He observes these phenomena by way of an estranging, distancing gaze – usually of contempt – while also participating in them. His gaze then provides the critical distance that is in the immediate dream-experience of the mass……..[He is one] who

> surreptitiously penetrates and observes the fabric of the city at a languorous pace, and estranged distance – has the time, and the disposition, to be bored, and thus to allow that dream bird of urban experience to hatch its egg (Lamarche 1999, 235-36).

The *flâneur* engaged with a boredom that, like Simmel's *metropolitan man*, was principally affective, as opposed a boredom that stemmed from with the subject. In this way, boredom moved from being a consequence of bourgeois self-reflection to a problem of the masses. Benjamin saw this affective quality in boredom all too well, most notably in his discussion of the weather and its role in the affect of modernity. He spoke of rain "making everything more hidden" and enticing sets of strategies to "get around the days of sun with subterfuges" (Benjamin 1999, 104). In one of his most famous passages in the *Arcades* Project, Benjamin writes that:

> The mere narcotizing effect which cosmic forces have on a shallow and brittle personality is attested in the relation of such a person to one of the highest and most genial manifestations of these forces: the weather. Nothing is more characteristic than that precisely this most intimate and mysterious affair, the working of the weather on humans, should have become the theme of their emptiest chatter. Nothing bores the ordinary man more than the cosmos. Hence, for him, the deepest connection between weather and boredom. How fine the ironic story of the splenetic Englishman who wakes up one morning and shoots himself because it is raining" (ibid. 101-2).

Weather, as with Simmel's electric lights, changed notions of personal and social rhythm in urban life. Casting the boredom the *flâneur* as *affective* in this way establishes multiple possibilities for the enactment by the subject as active, as opposed to the decidedly passive Heideggerian "mute fog." Benjamin was not the only who cast boredom as a wedge between the activity and passivity of the subject. Baudelaire himself, David Harvey notes, often oscillated between casting the *flâneur* as a

"disengaged and cynical voyeur on the one hand, and man of the people who enters into the life of his subjects with passion on the other" (Harvey 2003, 14)

Benjamin's turn on the *flâneur* was significant most of all in his notion that engaging with the city that left open realms of possibility that don't precipitously descend into the liquidation of desire. Such desire could be deferred through waiting, walking, or engaging in other activities that helped the agent to resist the lures of the commodity. Exactly what these activities were, and their various historical contexts, brings the discussion on boredom back to post-communist Sofia and the city's pernicious urban life developed under capitalism.

IN THE TEMPLE OF THE POST-COMMUNIST COMMODITY: JAZZ AND SOFIAN MUSICAL SPACES

In using Simmel and Benjamin's work as examples of a subjective place within the discourse on boredom, I am not using the *metropolitan man* or the *flâneur* as ideal types in the Weberian sense. To do so commits to a false epistemology of subjective experience that, ironically, was the failing of many of the 19th writings grappling with urban space. Rather, I have shown some of the historical conditions of possibility in which boredom was thought of as strategy of resistance against the city's siren call. Both the *metropolitan man* and the *flâneur*, as abstract subject positions, utilize boredom as a way to eject themselves from the urban cacophony and gain the privileged position of awareness, however fleeting that may be. For Simmel, awareness of the metropolis through becoming *blasé* only leads to the subject's acceptance of the rhythms of modernity, and ultimately conforming to them. For Benjamin, this awareness is

something of a deal with the devil, in that the price is the bitter isolation of boredom that eventually leads to subjective decay and, ultimately, nihilism.

And yet this fleeting form of resistance is important in the awakening of the possibility for performances of subjectivity within urban space. Akbar Abbas notes that in the early-1840s, it became briefly fashionable for Parisians to walk turtles through the arcades (Abbas 1989, 55). More than just a subtle critique of the speed of the walking crowds, walking turtles was also a tangible display of the disenchantment of the city for the *flâneur*. This kind of action, the small performances of subjective disengagement that that boredom actualizes, became as much a part of modern urban life as the buildings and streets themselves.

An example of *flâneur*-esque performance specific to Bulgaria was that of the post-war "hipster" (*stilyagi*), the image of the young slacker that originated in Moscow and spread throughout the Bloc during the early-1950s. Timothy Ryback cites a 1953 issue of the Sofian newspaper "Literary Front" (*Literaturen front*) that lambasts a group of young, aimless Bulgarian *stilyagi* led by "Petŭr," a twenty-six year old Sofian who carried a "bored, expressionless face, languid gestures and downcast eyes" and "pass[ed] their time telling jokes, playing bridge, and discussing the latest car models" (Ryback 1990, 10).[8]

[8] The emergence of this cousin of the *flâneur* had another, equally powerful source of discontent than the city itself. The *stilyagi* also bear as rebels of the communist suppression of the subject through conformity to collective ideals and values that fetishized the rural "heart" of Bulgaria and kept urban modernity, symbolized through Western capitalism, at arm's length. The idea that the essence of Bulgaria was located in the image of the peasant farmer was certainly not the creation of the communists, and in fact had much to do with the Agrarian Union's status as the prevailing political force in Bulgaria during the interwar period (Crampton 2007, 312). The direction of the Bulgarian Communist Party's architect Georgi

Musical spaces in post-communist Sofia have, I argue, become the same sort of commodity "temples" that Benjamin saw so clearly in the Parisian arcades, in which "objects….are already reified, wrenched from the actual processes within which they emerge, are formed and encountered" (Lamarche 1999, 212). In this objectification the clubs themselves present a particular kind of interiority, in which patrons can enter and experience the sleek and uninterrupted flow of the modern separate from the disjunctive Sofian streets, where old and decaying monuments to communist hegemony sit alongside stylishly-modern, privately-built apartment buildings. Within these clubs, musical performance becomes a commodity object, with value lying not in the music itself but as an integral part of the venue's architecture. Musicians became a part of this apparatus as well, desired by the owners and patrons, but as something embedded within the entire experience of the club, not as the focal point of the patrons' desires. Ultimately, musicians are placed in a situation where they hold very little power in terms of dictating repertoire and payment in many venues. I spoke with some during my field study that chose to work within this system, as these venues paid well enough to make a modest living and provided constant work for those that caught the favor of the owner(s). Those that didn't, however, found negotiating this club/bar/restaurant environment to be increasingly frustrating. Angel Zaberski, a multi-instrumentalist/composer who teaches improvisation at New Bulgarian University in Sofia, clarifies some of these frustrations in a recent interview.

Dimitrov brought to bear a standard of centralized authority that gave the image an unprecedented level of power and influence, becoming the symbol of the ethnically-based nationalism that became increasingly become the project of communist ideology under Todor Zhivkov.

> When [people] go to a concert in a hall, then they are going to truly listen. What worries me and makes me ill is that club activity at home [in Bulgaria] doesn't go in the right direction. People who visit clubs don't go to listen. They go to talk, to drink, to have fun. They just go to a club and the music is secondary. Recently I had a similar event – our concert had to start at 9:00PM, but of course we began after 11:00. A waitress came and asked me if we would begin soon, that some Canadians have come to listen and write for a program that begins at 9:00. I admit, I sank to the earth. Here, these Canadians had come not to drink, but to listen to music (Turiiska 2011).

Zaberski's perspective on the labor of musical performance speaks not just to the politics of venue negotiation, but also implicates the value of venue patrons as listeners. Bulgarians, engrossed in performing their own social capital, cast off the music and musicians as living wallpaper. Only a group of Canadians seemed interested in the music itself, which seemed to shock Zaberski on some level. But was their interest only in the allure of hearing an objectified "Bulgarian jazz," something I showed to be thoroughly lambasted by Vasil Parmakov in the first paragraph of this dissertation? On the surface, musicians working these venues seemed to only have the choice of engaging with either enchanted tourists or disenchanted locals.

For those musicians who did not utilize their newfound freedom to travel or emigrate to other parts of Europe or the United States, the decay in the quality of performance spaces highlighted by Zaberski was almost immediate. Pianist Antoni Donchev, whose career started in the late-1970s and is perhaps the most famous jazz pianist outside of Milcho Leviev, seemed to remain somewhat pessimistic about any sort of flowering for jazz in Bulgaria in post-communist times.

> At first, in the early-1990s, several jazz clubs were opened, but that was short lived. The alternatives were to open up to commercial music in order to survive and lose the spirit of jazz, or [to risk] closure….There are a couple of places

> where you can hear jazz one or more nights per week, but none of them are exclusively jazz….you must be very rich and, at the same time, a jazz enthusiast to open a facility and not have to worry about profits (Rosso 2009).

Despite several attempts in the last ten years to open and maintain establishments predicated on the programming of jazz, there remain almost no musical spaces dedicated solely to the performance improvised music in Sofia. Jazz Clubs Worldwide, a website which provides a resource listing jazz-supporting venues by country, has only four venues on the page for Bulgaria – all in Sofia and all of which had closed by the time I had arrived in November 2008. Although this independently-run website was certainly not a comprehensive list of venues, the various other websites listing social clubs and nightlife spots in Sofia and other cities showed only a few other clubs regularly programming jazz. For example, "The Program" (*Programata*), a top arts and culture magazines that catalogs all of the weekly events in Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Varna, and Burgas, listed only two "jazz" venues in Sofia during 2009, and only one in the rest of the cities combined, a Varna club named "Menthol".

One of the now-defunct clubs, an amenable spot called "Satchmo Boy," located on blvd. Aleksandŭr Stamboliiski just south of the Vasil Levski monument (*pametnik*), was one of the few venues devoted exclusively to jazz in Sofia in the mid-2000s. The small basement club, which until 2006 housed an American-owned restaurant known as "Stateside," reorganized under new ownership and attempted to create a "real" jazz club in Sofia. The venue's most prominent feature was a large illuminated sign featuring an older Louis Armstrong blowing on his trumpet that adorned the entrance. Phred Mileski, an American singer who came to Bulgaria with her husband while he did research on a

Fulbright grant in 2006-07, performed many times at the club and described "Satchmo Boy" as:

> [not] just a place to hear jazz that's much more than worth the price of admission – it's also a place for Bulgarian speakers to learn about jazz. Every Friday night at eight, jazz aficionado professor Stoyan Atanasov gives lectures on the history of this unique musical genre….the music, the menu and the interior décor have transformed [Satchmo Boy] into an [*sic*] unpretentiously cool little jazz establishment that has been striking a responsive chord with a good cross-section of Sofia's residents and visitors alike (Mileski 2007).

As popular as the review makes the establishment seem, "Satchmo Boy" closed amidst financial difficulties in the summer of 2008 just before my arrival in Sofia, perhaps proving Antoni Donchev's point about the ability of even moderately popular clubs to remain open.

Even attempts by the musicians themselves to open up venues willing to book jazz have run into tremendous difficulties. One of the most significant problems is the amount of money needed to open and maintain a venue in the cultural heart of Sofia. "Harmony," a small club that shared a space with a local coffee shop in one of the Sofian suburbs, showed early promise but closed after only four months. Other venues in Sofia like *Swingin' Hall* and *Soul in da Hole* maintain an interest in programming jazz, but perhaps seeing the recent failure of "Satchmo Boy" and other jazz-devoted establishments do not commit to the genre's programming full time. In fact, the lack of venues committed exclusively to jazz creates intriguing ontological links to similar venues in Sofia from the first half of the 20th century like Hotel Bulgaria and *Slavyanska Beseda*, where bands played whatever songs were popular with the urban elite patrons at the time.

Still, in the time since my original field study in 2009, both of these aforementioned venues have developed a wider field of performance opportunities encouraging musicians to experiment with different repertoire. *Swingin' Hall* features weekly performances from Vasil Parmakov's *Zone C* (*Zona C*), a trio that dates back to the early-1990s and one of the few surviving Sofian jazz groups from the era. *Soul in da Hole* has been even more productive of this regard, ascending to become the primary venue for jazz in Sofia since opening in the Spring of 2010. The basement space located on Vitosha Boulevard, south of the National Palace of Culture (NDK), has separated itself from other venues in several ways. For one, *Soul in da Hole* is one of the few venues to decorate its commodified interior with photographs of previous generations of Bulgarian jazz musicians, giving a tacit nod to the city's jazz musicians of years past. It has also become home for two of the city's larger ensembles, both formed since 2007. One is Trumpeter Mihail Yossifov's sextet, one of the few groups devoted to the prewar jazz and popular music that was part of interwar Sofia's social life. The other is Zaberski's big band *Brass Association* (*Brazz Asotsiatsiya*), a group that features many of the best musicians in Sofia, including several current members of the BNR Big Band. Both ensembles perform sporadically due to commitments to other groups by members, at most once or twice a month. During the summer months, when many musicians split time between Sofia and the Black Sea cities of Varna, Burgas, Sozopol, these groups get together even less often.

Though empirically there has been a noticeable difference in venues acceptable to jazz in the last two years, the troubling politics of venue negotiation remains. To many of

the musicians that I came to know during my fieldwork, this negotiation was physically, mentally, and spiritually exhausting. This point was most strongly illustrated through a story, told to me by another musician, about a popular Bulgarian jazz pianist from the early-1990s. While many contemporaries of this particular pianist pursued careers abroad, he stayed in Sofia and had been driven to alcoholism and drug abuse by the lack of gigs. Several others that I mentioned him to spoke of his bizarre stage behavior, constantly switching styles in the middle of songs almost at a whim. My own experience playing with him, during a jam session after a friend's gig, confirmed this behavior – he seemed to be playing in a shell, oblivious to everyone around him. When I expressed interest in talking to him afterward, a friend told me "not to bother – he'll just tell you crazy things."

Several people with whom I later talked about this particular musician cast his person's malaise as due not to drugs, but the *city* – the ways in which space and social relations had been reorganized under capitalism and affected the music scene. His subjective dissolution was due, ostensibly, to boredom – not the potentially redemptive boredom of Simmel/Benjamin, but *deep* boredom that Heidegger warned was one of the last steps before the end of subjectivity. Whether or not this boredom had really left him "mad" was most likely an exaggeration told to me for my benefit. More to the point, his "madness" was cast as a precautionary narrative against the dangers of teetering toward the wrong kind of *blasé*. This framing provides a very strong narrative component on the actualization of urban concerns, and the stakes for many of these musicians clearly go

beyond the confines of the music itself. How these concerns play out in a particular locale in Sofia is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

Tea House (*Chainata*) and Subjective Recovery

Chainata, also called *Tea House* or "Tea Factory" (*Chai vŭv fabrikata*), is located on the first floor of a building on Georgi Benkovski street that used to be the location of a now-defunct printing house. Upon opening in December 2006 as one of the first places of its kind in Sofia, *Tea House* quickly became reputable as an afternoon leisure spot with the ambiance of a *café* – a spot in which one can pass the time through reading or conversation away from the bustle of the busy streets. Though known at first for a wide selection of over sixty varieties of teas, *Tea House* also began to draw customers for the unique vegetarian-themed cuisine, which included an ayurvedic menu on Thursdays prepared by a guest chef. A review of the establishment published in the English-language newspaper *Sofia Echo*, took careful note of the unique ambiance offered by *Tea House*, a specific kind of casualness not often found in fast-paced Sofian clubs and restaurants.

> It [is]….an artsy-friendly place to relax in an armchair with a good cup of tea….with its coral coloured walls, mishmashed antique furniture and ever-changing display of artwork….jazz and classics were playing softly over the loudspeakers and so we sat there, talking and trying to finish everything….and drinking tea and then it was nearly 11PM, and we were very kindly asked to consider finishing up, but instead it all turned into a jam session on the piano, with the cook coming out to hear as well….Daytime sees *Tea House* as a gathering place for local businesspersons and people from the arts world. Somewhat charming, because so not-Bulgarian, are the groups of chic businesswomen who gather after work for insalata Caprese and gossip (Rahn 2009).

Though the idea of a *Tea House* whose menu, interior design, and creation leisured space fits within the desires of the cosmopolitan post-communist Sofian middle class, *Tea House* also maintains some historical linkages to the Ottoman coffee house (Turkish: *kahvehane*; Bulgarian: *kafene*) that were popular throughout much of Bulgaria since the mid-19th century – before the Liberation of 1878. In the years after the liberation, as Bulgaria distanced itself more and more from the Ottoman legacy, the social space of the coffee house remained in the form of European-style *cafés*, which maintained a similar function until communist rule when such locales were attacked as sites of bourgeois leisure and vices. The revitalization of these spaces in the post-communist period in the form of places like *Tea House* offers a tangible link to the first attempts to construct a Westernized bourgeois urban culture in the first half of the 20th century.

Tea House is different from other coffee houses, cafés, and music venues in Sofia, though, is the establishment's attitude toward live jazz. Like some of the other venues mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Tea House* offers live music two or three days a week between Wednesday and Sunday. The Friday and Sunday night performances are usually reserved for non-recurrent groups or special quests, none more than 5-6 people due to special concerns. This lack of space is clearly the greatest challenge that *Tea House* faces as a music venue. The capacity is, at best, 25-30 people, and with rooms for a stage the band is forced to set up on ground level no more than a table-length away from the patrons. In the corner sits a well-worn upright piano that is rarely tuned properly, taking up even more space. Worse yet, a large support pylon sits in the center of the room,

blocking the view for the two or three tables in the back closest to the entrance. The untreated cement floor causes major acoustical problems when the place is half full or less.

Clearly, *Tea House* is not an ideal space for the performance of live music based on a lack of space and awkward physical dimensions. But in many ways, the venue maintains an affect that makes it very distinct from the polished, commodity-laden clubs that dot central Sofia. For one, as a recovered industrial space *Tea House* falls into the vast reclamation of underutilized and abandoned buildings that were adopted by private entities in the early years of capitalist reform. This kind of recovery became very common in the years after the transition, as buildings sitting vacant in the center were sold and leased to commercial developers, recasting the administrative and residential center of communist Sofia into more of a business district. At the same time, private development began to restore the crumbling facades of the pre-1944 architecture in central Sofia, returning some of the veneer and social heart that was slowly dismantled during the communist period. This process of restoration has returned central Sofia, at least in spirit, back into how this part of the city was in the years immediately prior to WWII when the most popular hotels and dance halls were in their prime.

Of note from *Tea House's* weekly program are the Wednesday night concerts given by a group of local jazz musicians playing "standards" – songs that have been institutionalized into the jazz repertory and are an integral part of the pedagogical processes of learning. What makes the sessions so intriguing is that these concerts are

more organized than typical jam sessions. Rarely did I ever see anyone from the audience sit in, and only occasionally follow any sort of set program or theme.

I was told that the Wednesday nights were arranged by Dimitrov shortly after *Tea House's* opening in 2006. Apparently, the owner wanted to create an ambiance for the venue's preferred clientele, with music that was coded both sophisticated and unobtrusive. Dimitrov was asked to put a small jazz band together for a weekly performance. He and Momchev became the first two regulars, and at least one of them is present for every Wednesday night. The group usually consists of three to six players, the band filled out by a revolving door of local talent, including late pianist Rumen Toskov, bassists Boris Taslev and Vesselin Vesselinov-Eko, guitarist Shibil Benev, and Momchil Atanasov, among others. Occasionally, musicians from outside of Sofia like Plovdiv-based saxophonist Dimitar Liolev and Stara Zagora-based trumpeter Ventislav Blagoev come and play. Other Bulgarian ex-patriot musicians also sit in, such as trombonist Georgi Konazarov's appearance in June 2010, though this is a much rarer occurrence.

But *what* is being played, I would argue, is just as important as either the space itself or the musicians. As I mentioned earlier, the vast majority of the Wednesday night sessions are various jazz standards, an important part of the pedagogical and canonical aspects of jazz production, but certainly not the pinnacle of a creative artistic expression that values originality above all else. Standards offer more than just an archive into an ontological construction of jazz performance practice – such repertoire offers a potentially critical voice in a way that original compositions may not have the same kind

of access to. Understanding this requires a brief discussion of what standards are, their meanings with broader notions of jazz practice and canonization, and how standards are themselves commodified.

The concept of "paying your dues," which has become an integral trope within the institutionalization of jazz throughout the world, includes learning standards and incorporating them into performances as an ongoing quest for mastery. Paul Berliner, for example, argues that the development of a repertory is an inherently subjective process requiring years of experimentation, with standards providing the most comprehensive way through which to judge oneself (Berliner 1994, 226-27).[9] While this perspective provides a useful way to think about how musicians and their practices fit within the hegemony of the jazz canon, there are limits in the assumption of a homogeneous relationship between jazz musicians and the spaces of performance – every venue essentially an ideal "jazz club" of hipster lore. The needs and wants of the venue managers played a substantial role in what musicians play at particular places as well, as I have also found in my own experiences. The fractured notions of jazz between musicians, listeners, and venue bookers, combined with the lack of venues in general create an environment where repertoire becomes fully embroiled within the labor apparatus of musicmaking.

[9] My interpretation of "standard" goes beyond that of songs from Tin Pan Alley, Broadway musicals, and jazz of the Big Band and early Bebop eras (roughly 1930-1955) and extends any music that has been institutionalized since the mass production of fakebooks began in the 1970s. This includes the aforementioned repertoire, but also adds jazz and popular music from the 1960s onward. For more information on the history of fakebook production and the changing nature of their use, see Kernfeld 2006.

Standards in this context – one which is most relevant to the discussion of the shifts in musical professionalization in post-communism – are "standard" not because of their incorporation by musicians into personal repertories, but because of their repetition through the mechanisms of media and consumption via capitalism. This is part of what Robert Fink identifies as a "culture of repetition," in which an "extremely high level of repetitive structuring necessary to sustain capitalist modernity becomes salient in its own right, experienced directly as constituent of subjectivity" (Fink 2005, 4). In other words, the movements of these songs as popular ones through the mechanisms of global capital via radio, recordings, concert tours, and later television placed them firmly in the both the public consciousness and literally "under the fingers" of musicians who played for such audiences. As E. Taylor Atkins has argued, the circulation of commodities and technologies under capitalism that had the greatest impact on the dissemination of jazz around the world in the 20th century and in the creation of venues for the music (Atkins 2003 *xiv*; McKay 2005, 3). Musicians incorporating standards into their repertory, then, had as much to do with the complex political economy between musicians, their audiences, and the facilitators (record producers, venue owners, cultural bureaucrats) as to any adherence to pedagogical idealism. Standards become as much a part of the labor identity of jazz musicians as much as their aesthetic identity under these circumstances.

The preponderance of "fakebooks" – a term used to cover both legally and illegally produced collections of songs from various sources – are the objects resulting from this institutionalization. As mass-produced texts that have served as both a stylistic lexicon and useful shortcut through pedagogical processes, fakebooks have historically

proved an invaluable tool for the working musician. As Barry Kernfeld shows, forerunners of the fakebook, most notably the Tune-Dex, rose amongst musicians playing in cocktail lounges in the US during the early-1940s, and eventually became legalized in the early-1970s (Kernfeld 2006, 47). An easy-to-use systemization of popular songs, fakebooks became a useful tool where musicians' primary purpose was to acquiesce to varied tastes of the patrons. These books became part of the commodity and labor circulation of music, and thus made their way around the globe to become an integral part of the musician's professional milieu.

The ontology of standards as a music of labor production takes an intriguing turn when thought of in reference to the history of jazz in Bulgaria specifically. As I argued in Chapters 1 and 2, access to new repertoire was mediated by various factors such as lack of comprehensive recording distribution and social policy that led to the outright bans on music from particular artists. In addition, the stance by the Union of Bulgarian Composers on jazz, as evident in their attitudes toward Milcho Leviev and his output with the EOBRT, meant that modern tropes and devices of composition and improvisation were not widely accepted until the late-1960s. Before that, "standards" were the only potentially acceptable outlet for Bulgarian musicians to engage with jazz. As such, a particular historical linkage of labor identities becomes transparent, giving the musicians of today connection to other Bulgarians of years past through repertoire, context, and repetition.

"Standards" are thus shrouded in a laboring cloak as a piece of global commodity circulation, incorporating them within the broader affect of boredom as well. Within the

familiarity of "standards" is embedded the seeds of their *invisibility* to both musicians and listeners. This invisibility makes standards an ideal repertoire for limiting the power of music within the broader affective dimensions of the venue. The cloak of boredom lies in this familiarity, in the feeling of having heard and played these songs before, night after night. While this does not sever the élan of the standard as a platform for creative expression in jazz, the context of musical labor in Sofia since 1989 and the everyday experience of musicians points toward a considerably more dystopic perspective on the relationship between musician, listener, space, and repertoire. This has certainly played out in many of my interactions with jazz musicians here, who have constantly questioned my own desire to write about what they do, a concept that is explored in more detail in Chapter 5.

And yet, within this understanding of standards as a repertoire of boredom, though, is the key to understanding how the Wednesday night sessions at *Tea House* can be thought of as a series of libratory acts against the commodity culture that permeates Sofian life. Just like walking turtles through the Parisian arcades as a stylish critique against the breakneck pace of urban life, the jazz musicians playing at *Tea House* incorporate the repertoire of their own labor and turn back against the commodity temples of the Sofian music scene. In some ways *Tea House* is an ideal location for this kind of resistance to take place because the venue doesn't become a commodity itself by succumbing to the powers of such imagery, even while engaging with and incorporating parts of the commodity apparatuses that dominate musical venues in Sofia. There are no

blue neon "JAZZ" signs over the bar or large pictures of Louis Armstrong adorning the doorways, or empty white piano bodies.

And yet, despite all of the humble industrial roots and lack of pure displays of ostentatiousness, *Tea House* shouldn't be considered a pristine space of artistic liberation, isolated from the apparatuses of commodity fetishism that dominate many of Sofia's musical venues. In the attempt to create the bourgeois leisure space historically linked through the *kafene* and the *café*, *Tea House* ends up replicating commodities that fit into the idea of a new, Europeanized urban cosmopolitanism of the Sofian middle class. The inclusion of jazz at *Tea House* is certainly part of this, and from this perspective casting the venue as a kind of shelter against the forces of capitalist modernity is dubious at best. And as I have shown through the examples of Simmel's *metropolitan man* and Benjamin's *flâneur*, there really is no shelter for the subject against these forces. But if the struggle of the subject to find place and meaning within the affects of the city is ultimately a losing one, as Baudelaire and other modernists say, this does not preclude the possibility of resistance in terms of everyday actions. In this way, musicians are able to enact resistance when performing at *Tea House* in ways that they cannot in other venues. In this space, musicians find ways to avoid becoming simulacra and conform to the commodified ideal of the "jazz club" as so many other venues in Sofia have tried.

Tea House is ultimately significant as a locale because the venue seemingly grapples with the same kinds of resistances and capitulations to modernity as the musicians who play there. In resisting the more luxurious displays of jazz commodification that dot other clubs in Sofia, *Tea House* still at its core portrays a

different picture of the simulacrul modern, as with the jazz musicians at the Wednesday night concerts. Boredom becomes discernable as an affect of post-communist Sofia, one that is inescapable. One way of dealing with this is using the repertoire of that boredom to carve out a space that uses those disaffecting commodities to create a moment of breathing room – the Parisian walks turtles, the *flâneur* gambles, the musicians at *Tea House* play standards. But the space is only temporary. In repeating this performance week after week, and engaging with the notions of waiting and perpetual deferment through playing standards, the musician as modern subject gains breathing room against the affects of the city that are constantly dissolving the self.

The simultaneous allure and trap of boredom, as Benjamin notes, is that it is warm and inviting within a cloak of grayness, but within that trap that new potentialities for experience might arise. The site of this new mode of experience is not within the metaphysical, but within the realm of the everyday as a lived reality for these musicians. I'll close by invoking feminist scholar Patrice Petro, who argues that boredom's value is in best capturing the subjective experience of time in modernity as simultaneously "empty and full". I would add that it also captures the same experience as both *intense* and *monotonous*, and thinking of boredom as an affective plane through which the subject performs through this nervous oscillation can help to understand the playground of this visceral everyday.

Chapter 5: Scenes from Sofia: Narrative, Montage, and Fracture Amongst Bulgarian Jazz Musicians After 1989

On an evening in late-February 2009 I was given the opportunity to sit in on my first gig since arriving in Bulgaria the previous November. The invitation came from Petŭr Momchev, a Silistra-born saxophonist who is one of the best known and most sought after jazz musicians in the city. I had been speaking with Momchev often since meeting him the previous month, and our conversations eventually led to the invitation, as he was always keen to play with others. This particular gig was to take place at Sofia's Czech Cultural Center (CCC), located on Georgi Rakovski Street in the city center. Established in 1949, the Czech Cultural Center in Sofia is one of 20 from around the world that serves as an educational and outreach institution for Czech culture abroad. In addition to the restaurant/bar, the center houses an extensive library of Czech literature and hosts events that include music, theater, film, art, and lectures. The venue also programs jazz from local artists on occasion, most often during Thursday or Friday nights – hence the gig I would be playing on this night.

When the night of the gig arrived, alto saxophone slung over my shoulder, I walked the roughly half a kilometer from my apartment to the Center, arriving about an hour prior to the 7:00 PM start time. Having never been to the CCC before, I took a few moments to survey the interior of the building and figure out where exactly I was supposed to go. The front was dominated by the Prague Gallery Café (Kafe Galeriya Praga), which consisted of a bar and a sizeable dining area that was about ¾ full of dinner patrons. Assuming that we would be playing in the dining room, I looked around for Momchev or any of the other musicians so I could begin warming up, but could see no one familiar. After briefly scanning the room, I spotted Moni Chikov, a young student guitarist and acquaintance who would be running the door that night. As I made my way toward him, I realized that the band would not be playing for the diners at all. To his back sat a large set of sliding wood doors, behind which was a small, 50-60 person concert hall with a large stage. The other musicians were already setting up, and after

saying hello to Momchev he proceeded to introduce me to them. I had previously met drummer Dimitar Dimitrov, a well-established veteran of the Bulgarian music scene and professor of drum set and percussion at New Bulgarian University since 1998. The bassist was Boris Taslev, a Sofian-based session player who frequently played in the pit orchestra for the Sofia Musical Theatre. Rounding out the group on guitar was a friend of Momchev's from Varna who had recently completed a tour playing with a cruise ship band and had returned home to record.

By the time the gig was supposed to start, the hall was still completely empty. Moni told me that no one from the dining room was willing to pay the seven leva entrance fee since they could just listen to the music for free from the dining area.[1] *The manager refused to stop serving dinner through the performance, all but guaranteeing that none of the people in the dining area came in. The band waited fifteen minutes past the start time, but still no one came. The empty hall seemed rather cavernous, despite the relatively small size.*

Tired of waiting, Momchev simply shrugged his shoulders and decided to start the band with Coltrane's "Naima." During the first set two people meandered in, but neither was from the dinner crowd that had been sitting outside. One was Atanas Popov, another local drummer who had stopped by between gigs to check out some of the set. The other was a woman in her late-50s whose name I didn't catch, but she was obviously well acquainted with the musicians. After chatting briefly with the new arrivals, an annoyed yet visibly resigned Momchev started the second set. Moni joined the other two people in the audience, cognizant that there was no need to keep manning the door for new arrivals. Four songs went by, and Momchev decided to end the gig early, claiming that to play for nobody was a waste of time. He put his saxophone in his case and apologized to me for cutting the gig short, but it was just a formality. Situations similar to this had happened to us many times in our respective careers, and this certainly wouldn't be the last time.

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[1] Roughly $5.50, as the exchange rate between the dollar and leva in 2009 was between $1 – 1.25 lv and $1 – 1.60 lv.

* * *

Scenes like these were common at concerts I attended during my time in Sofia. Although few gigs that I attended reached quite this level of open frustration, there was little expectation amongst the musicians for large audience attendance. Most affluent Sofians spent their nights crowding into a piano bar, *chalga* folk-pop club, or any of the chic dance clubs on trendy boulevards like Vitosha or Rakovski. Jazz, unfortunately, had become an afterthought for many Bulgarians over the years – a far cry from the throngs that packed *Slavyanska Beseda* and Hotel Bulgaria in the years after World War II. Capitalism became a call to a shiny new modern for many in Sofia, and thus the city was expanding and fracturing into an urban cacophony of cars parked on sidewalks, VIP clubs, and the Mall of Sofia, which was the first American-style shopping mall built in Sofia in June 2006.

This chapter aims to understand the ways in which subjects articulate their experience of the post-communist city in the everyday. As I argued in Chapter 4, the Western discourse on boredom provides unique opportunities for understanding how Bulgarian subjects orient themselves within fractured spaces after the experiential fading of what Patrice Petro has termed the "aftershock of the new" (Petro 2002). The affects of the post-communist city and accentuate boredom through a particular kind of commodity fetishism that informs agential actions on the parts of both musicians and patrons. I have shown that musicians' resistance through boredom is characterized by strategies of

reflexive engagement through playing standards, as well as a refusal to be co-opted as objects in the "commodity temples" that make up many of Sofia's musical venues.

The resistance is just one part, I argue, of a series of narrative spaces that are constructed by musicians and others as a strategy to understand how a fractured series of images, commodities, and signs becomes conceptualized as a lived space. The historical figures of the *metropolitan man* and *flâneur*, and by extension jazz musicians in Bulgaria, are all examples of an ontology of subjective experiences of the urban new. Now, I elaborate on exactly *how* in the post-communist era, musicians sought new means to conceptualize their senses of self out of the fractured experiences, and drew upon received structures, politics, ideologies, and social formations to inform their attitudes and dispositions.

In order to fully capture this sense of fracture in this text, I have divided this chapter into a series of three vignettes chronicling the dynamics of these narrative spaces and how I became aware of them. I am employing different registers – opening with an italicized personal voice to chronicle my engagement with these spaces, followed by an attempt to unpack their dynamics from historical and social perspectives. My goal in doing this is to link the heterotopic urban affects discussed in Chapter 4 with how musicians engage with these various affective states perpetuated by boredom, fascination, and the fractured nature of modernity.

Each vignette is titled with an extract from the framing narrative that opens the corresponding section followed by an analysis of the structuring features within the narrative. *Endangered Species* chronicles the reflexive rhetoric of musicians toward a

concept of "Bulgarian jazz," and details anxieties over allegories of disappearance and loss. *Old Communists* explores the politics of Bulgarian "jazz" festivals and the aesthetic divide between musicians and the festival bureaucracy that has existed since the 1970s. *The Best Musician He Was Capable of Becoming* follows the development of educational opportunities for Bulgarian musicians both inside and outside of Bulgaria, and the decisions musicians make when trying to break into the global commodity cycles of jazz production. I use a case study of a young guitar player, Aleksandŭr (Alex) Logozarov, to show the benefits Bulgarian musicians receive from studying in places like the Prince Klaus Conservatory in Groningen as opposed to similar institutions in Bulgaria. Together, the four sections are meant to convey the sense of the dislocation felt by these musicians in their post-communist lives, and elucidate the practices and tactics they utilize in order to reconfigure their sense of self within a historical field.

As I undertook this project, I found that my presence as a researcher of the history of "Bulgarian jazz" brought to the surface many of the desires and anxieties embedded within the practices of musicians in Sofia. In trying to frame themselves for me in various ways, the complex relationship between history, subject, and urban affect came to the surface. The difficulties encountered by Bulgarian musicians give lie to the neoliberal notion that capitalism, and by extension its aesthetics and art forms, could make Bulgaria magically "whole" again through the influence and affect of free markets and democracy. This process of being made "whole" involved repairing the social damage wrought by 45 years of communist rule in the making of the "ethically consuming" communist subject and disciplining those who didn't comply with this

transformation of self. The best way to unpack this neoliberal fallacy, I argue, is through historical montage, a technique where "images…already formed, or half-formed, so to speak, [are] latent in the world of popular imagination, awaiting the final touch of the dialectical magician's wand" (Taussig 1984, 89). Historical montage is useful in framing Bulgarian musicians' strategies of epistemological construction of under post-communism, in which performing subjects utilize, reshape and fracture those images that reference empirical or imagined pasts in order to provide subjective cohesion. If the affects of the post-communist city discussed in Chapter 4 serve to break apart the subject, then the process of historical montage allows those same subjects moments of self-coherence.

Furthermore, this framework contextualizes my own attempts to draw parallels between the construction of self amongst post-communist musicians with the construction of self amongst previous generations of musicians referenced in earlier chapters. In drawing these parallels I show how the experience of fragmentation is both historically specific, to the period after 1989, and a continuation of the experiences of jazz musicians in Bulgaria since the early-20th century.

To better understand the fragmenting conditions under which Bulgarian urban musicians lived, in is necessary to review professional music in general since the collapse of communism. The post-1989 hope that a free market economy would finally thrust Bulgaria into global equivalence with Western Europe was irrecoverably crushed by the financial crisis of 1997. Some of my older friends in Sofia spoke of the great difficulties during those years: days without power or hot water, neighborhoods and parks dangerous

after dark, garbage strewn everywhere. Musicians were forced to make changes in the ways that they undertook the business of playing music. These changes were significantly more difficult for those who had spent their entire careers under the umbrella of communist patronage of the arts. The changes were just as profound even for jazz musicians who had more experience with capitalist musical systems from playing in other parts of Europe during the 1970s and 1980s. The conditions in Bulgaria were such that many began looking abroad for musical opportunities. While amenable spaces to play in Sofia became scarce, access to Europe and the United States had never seemed so open.

MORE MONEY, MORE PROBLEMS: PROFESSIONAL MUSIC SINCE 1989

The resignation of Todor Zhivkov as Chairman of the Bulgarian State Council on November 10, 1989 and the subsequent collapse of the People's Republic of Bulgaria marked the end of both communist ideologically-driven modernity and the systemization of state-sponsored musical culture. The impact of this change on the careers of Bulgarian musicians was tremendous, most notably for those trained and employed under the state-sponsored folk groups like the Bulgarian National Folklore Ensemble and Choir "Philip Kutev" and the Bulgarian State Radio Folk Ensemble. Under the communist regime these groups enacted a systemization of the local in which repertoire was incorporated into the ensemble via the musicians contributing songs from their native regions, which

were then arranged and rehearsed for a wide range of performances.[2] They also had a monopoly on radio airplay, concert spaces, recordings, and interstate tours throughout the Soviet Bloc. This also held true for other ensembles like the Sofia Philharmonic, the Bulgarian National Opera, and the EOBRT (now the Bulgarian National Radio Big Band), although one could argue that these groups were by the late-1980s less important politically than the state folk ensembles.[3]

After 1989 these ensembles no longer reaped the same level of government patronage and attention in terms of exposure, income, and amenities such as health care. The regime collapse also had a marked effect on the music education system that had fed the best Bulgarian talent to the professional ensembles. Although these organizations continued to exist with limited government support during the post-communist period, they were no longer a part of the ideological project of the government to shape Bulgarian culture in the image of core communist values. This meant that these groups no longer maintained the advantage of being the only practical performance opportunities in Bulgaria for those trained in institutions like the musical high schools and the "Pancho Vladigerov" State Academy of Music in Sofia. The state ensembles became, in essence,

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[2] See Buchanan 2006, Part II, Chapters 6-9. The chapters dealing with region professional ensembles in Pirin, Rhodope, and Thrace show a different side to the dialecticism of the state and the local, in that professional training and education are melded with the preservation of idealized local tradition in order to give each ensemble a distinct flavor.

[3] During the 20th century in Bulgaria there was a differentiation between non-professional musicians who often played non-professional village music – *svirdzhii* – and professional musicians who played western classical music or, later, in the state folk orchestras – *musikanti*. The designations remain to this day in some quarters, showing that the communist project of ideologizing every sphere of Bulgarian musical life was in some respects a failure.

private enterprises that had to compete for young talent with the burgeoning tourist industry both within Bulgaria and throughout the rest of Europe.

Within the movement to a market economy in Bulgaria during the 1990s, the enclosed, self-sustaining world of the state ensembles gave way to an atmosphere where market demand dictated labor opportunities rather than state patronage. Before 1989, "wedding musicians" (*svatbarski musikanti*) like Ivo Papasov had amassed a great deal of wealth playing wedding ceremonies throughout Bulgaria, becoming some of the first modern musical entrepreneurs in the country (Buchanan 1991, 2002; Rice 1994, 240-60). By the end of the 1980s, professional musicians from the state folk ensembles began to follow suit and enhance their income by playing weddings on weekends (Buchanan 2006, 184-5). But musicians who had a fair amount of autonomy outside of state regulation were more the exception than the rule. The transition into capitalism was considerably more difficult for other musicians, who had faced little competition for positions in various state-sponsored ensembles in prior years. The needs and desires of the new performance spaces emphasized quantitative musical skills like ability to play within many different styles and on many different instruments. This is a stark contrast to the system under the communist regime that valued above all narrow, highly trained skill set on a single instrument. Because of the rigorous specialization promoted by music academies and universities, historically it has been difficult for musicians to create any tangible kind of personal and creative independence in their musicmaking without leaving the confines of Bulgaria. To be suddenly thrust into a world where almost every musical job was contested and steady sources of income scarce required a fundamental

change in the ways professional musicians practiced their craft. Bulgarian musicians in the 1990s had to develop strategies to diversify their skill sets, learn to negotiate the world of booking agents and venue management to arrange concerts, and find ways to market their abilities in a rapidly growing Bulgarian culture industry that was no longer focused on the intense ethnic nationalism of the communist period.

Regardless of where musicians focused their labor energies at home or abroad, the new system necessitated a noticeable shift in the practices of Bulgarian professional musicians all across the country during the 1990s. Establishments like restaurants, hotels, and taverns in Sofia, in vacation spots on the Black Sea, and in mountain resorts like Bansko and Shumen quickly became more important for the economic survival of professional musicians after 1989. Many of these places employed small house bands, usually between four and seven musicians, playing anywhere from once per week to every night with repertoire depending on the needs of the venue. Also, many musicians worked at several different establishments in different cities throughout the year while sending part or all of their wages back home. A musician could play regularly at several places in Sofia during the fall, spend a few weeks in Bansko for the winter ski season, return to Sofia for the spring, and then spend the summer playing on the Black Sea coast in Varna or Burgas. The amount of travel depends on the financial need, flexibility, and skill of each individual musician, but the relatively small size of Bulgaria meant that traversing a circuit of several cities to play various venues could be achieved with only a moderate amount of effort.

One of the best examples of a popular type of establishment in Bulgaria are the "taverns" (*mehani*, from the Turkish word *meyhane*), which in Bulgaria emulated a historical rural revision of traditional Ottoman urban taverns in food, architecture, and atmosphere. These taverns often employed bands playing various village styles on traditional instruments like bagpipe (*gaida*), wooden flute (*kaval*), and double-headed drum (*tŭpan*). During the communist period, taverns were often attached to hotels and resorts and employed musicians and dancers as entertainment for foreign tourists. Such work was popular amongst folk ensemble veterans during times of hiatus. Towards the end of the 1980s, several of these establishments became semi-independent cooperatives with some autonomy for choosing repertoire, musicians and dancers, a harbinger of things to come in the next decade (Buchanan 2006, 268-9).

In more recent years, some of these venues have developed a dinner theater-esque variety format that featured costumed performers, a mix of live and recorded music, and highly-choreographed routines to folk, pop-folk, and turbo folk songs from around the Balkans. Some of these locales have replaced live musicians with a combination of recorded music and dancers. A good example of this kind of establishment is "Happy Village" (*Veselo Selo*), a restaurant chain with locations in several major Bulgarian cities that puts on elaborately costumed live shows during summer evenings. Although I cannot speak to the other locations, the Happy Village in Sofia employs about a dozen male and female dancers for routines that strategically utilize a number of rural Bulgarian, Turkish, and Romany ("Gypsy") stereotypes. I dined at this restaurant with friends one evening in July of 2009, and was surprised at the lack of live musicians in the

performance.[4] The show was supposed to take place outdoors, but instead took place within the confines of the indoor dining area due to rain. The performers encouraged audience participation in various *horo* (circle dances), *kyuchek* (improvised "belly" dances), and *chalga* pop-folk songs. During this particular show all of the music was prerecorded and played through loudspeakers mounted on the wall, though some of the dancers used clarinets, double-headed drums (*tŭpani*), and wooden flutes (*kavali*) as props.

Most hotels and nightclubs, on the other hand, were looking for groups that could play a wide variety of styles appropriate for dancing and the consumption of alcohol. This movement can be traced back to the mid-1980s, when the popularity of discos and black market recordings from the US and Western Europe created a market for Western-style rock, heavy metal, and ska/reggae bands consisting primarily of amateur musicians in their teens and early-20s (Levy 1992). These bands tended to employ Western-style electric instruments and play a combination of Western rock and pop, piano jazz, and Bulgarian and Russian pop songs. When the style known as *chalga* pop-folk became popular during the mid-1990s, these styles were included into the repertoire of such groups as well.[5]

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[4] *Veselo Selo* was the only establishment I attended promoting a "village" atmosphere and featuring authentic Bulgarian food that did not use live musicians for evening music. Two other establishments in/near Sofia, "The Windmill" (*Vodenitsita*) and *Mehana*, both employed live bands for dinner shows. Both, however, were much smaller spatially than *Veselo Selo* and this was almost certainly considered by each establishment when making decisions about booking acts.

[5] *Chalga*, or pop-folk has been one of the most popular styles of music in 21st century Bulgaria, combining hip-hop, folk music, Europop, and exoticized signifiers of the Turkish and Roma minorities such as belly dancing. Although the genre started as an urban phenomenon, the style quickly spread throughout Bulgaria and is popular throughout the country, even amongst the villages and older demographics. For more

The popularity of the nightclub in post-communist Sofia led to the development of a new type of venue - the piano bar – that began to thrive in the mid-2000s. By the summer of 2008 piano bars had spread to almost every city and town in Bulgaria and were enjoying tremendous patronage amongst the Bulgarian middle class and foreign tourists. The policies regarding musician employment varied from place to place, but most piano bars in Sofia booked musicians to play one or two days per week. Again, repertoire varied between musicians, but sets commonly consisted of an eclectic mix of pop music from Bulgaria and surrounding countries, Europop, and "classic rock" from the United States and Great Britain.

With the increase in the number of work visas to other parts of Europe in the early-1990s, many opportunities outside of Bulgaria opened to musicians for the first time. This prompted a wave of labor migration of musicians in the post-communist period, a wave that included technical specialists, skilled workers, and college students attempting to maximize their employment prospects. Of course, the unstable labor atmosphere within Bulgaria during the 1990s was also instrumental in convincing many with marketable skills to seek opportunities within more stable economies abroad. This state of affairs was exacerbated at times by intense periods of currency inflation, shortages of commodities and goods such as gasoline and bread, rising crime rates, and political corruption. By 1994, a good yearly salary for an average middle class Bulgarian was close to 60,000 *leva*, as opposed to 4,800 *leva* in 1989 (Buchanan 2002). Both

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detailed information *on chalga*'s production, popularity, and appropriation of orientalist imagery, see Rice 2002, Kurkela 2007, and Silverman 2007.

figures represented about the same value in American dollars. The gap between the value of Bulgarian currency and rising prices led to instances of pyramid schemes, bank closures, and ultimately unrest and violence amongst the labor unions. This culminated in the events of the Fall/Winter of 1996-97, when the independent trade union *Podkrepa* and the Confederation of the Independent Trade Unions of Bulgaria (KNSB) began conducting mass protests in Sofia, Plovdiv, and other cities that finally led to a violent confrontation between protesters and police on January 11th (Robertson 2004, 253). Although these union actions and the subsequent 1997 parliamentary elections did much to stabilize the worst of the inflation and illegal currency prospecting, a new era of migratory practices had been formed in the midst of this crisis, and had a profound effect on Bulgaria up to the present day and beyond.

Although sometimes this movement resulted in permanent migration to Western Europe or the US, a phenomenon that had been a frequent response among elite musicians even during the communist period, a more common strategy has been simply to leave Bulgaria for long periods of time whilst returning to the country during the times of the year in which they are not working. Such migration has significant roots in the historical practices of people in the region through the concept of *gurbet*, a Turkish word meaning "foreign land." Though *gurbet* has come to mean "exile" or "displacement," the word also connotes the seasonal migration of labor (Ilcan 2002, 67). An example of gurbet during the period of the First World War was of Albanian men traveling to the United States to earn money to send back to their families in Prespa Albania (Sugarman

1997, 13). *Gurbet* practices have been intimately connected to music and poetry in the region since the late-19th century (Sugarman 2007, 274).

Some of the most lucrative musical work abroad for Bulgarian musicians are on Mediterranean and Scandinavian cruise ships. This work is often seasonal, especially for Scandinavian cruises that operate almost exclusively during the spring and summer months. Certainly, these jobs may not be the most artistically-stimulating for musicians (often a combination of Western popular music, dance orchestra repertoire, and songs from American and British musicals), but they provide a certain amount of financial autonomy that has been difficult for many to attain in Bulgaria in recent years. I was told that playing a four-to-six month commitment on a cruise ship could potentially earn up to 8,000 euro (app. 16,000 *leva*, or $11,200) depending on location, cruise line, contract length, and other factors (personal communication 2009). This is fairly lucrative sum for a musician based in Bulgaria, and more than could be earned playing most kinds of venues within the country. Wages garnered from playing on ships could last an individual or a family for months in Bulgaria, and many depended on these kinds of jobs to supply most of their yearly income. This practice has become even more prevalent after 1997, when the events of the currency crash of that year helped to stabilize the hyper-inflated Bulgarian currency to a more manageable level that has more or less maintained to this day.[6]

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[6] The currency crash of 1997 was result of years of inflation and economic mismanagement at the hands of the Bulgarian National Bank starting from the collapse of the Zhivkovian communist party. The crisis, which started in May 1996, came to a head in February of the next year when the consumer price index rose almost 243% in a month and the *lev* lost 98% of value against the dollar compared to 1995. Politically, the crisis led to the sacking of the BSP-led government during that year's elections. Stefan

While cruise ships offered some of the best financial opportunities available to Bulgarian musicians, not all of them saw the work as a lucrative enterprise. With contracts mandating long commitments, playing the same shows night after night, and rumors of discrimination towards Bulgarians in the form of longer contracts at lower pay than musicians of comparable skill from other parts of Europe, cruise ships to some seemed too much like the Odyssian sirens. I am reminded of a conversation with a Sofian musician about cruise ships in which his perspective was that this kind of work came at the undesirable cost of one's musical freedom. The exact word he used to describe the cruise ship circuit was *graveyard* – insofar that those musicians working cruise ships were trapped in repetitive chains of playing the same repertoire on the same ships for fifteen or twenty years (personal communication 2009). Their entire lifestyle was built around wages earned from the ships, and to him this precluded the possibility of any kind of artistic development. To the musician who constructed this metaphor it is clear that the money was not worth the price of artistic nihilism.

FRACTURE, HISTORY, AND SPACES OF NARRATIVE

The graveyard metaphor indicates how the alienation of labor under capitalism is often conceptually at odds with constructions of an autonomous musical subjectivity that is commonly associated with jazz performance.[7] In everyday practice cruise ship work does not guarantee subjective malaise, any more that restaurant or resort work. The

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Sofiianski, the newly-elected UDF Prime Minister, worked with the IMF to introduce measures to stabilize the *lev*. On July 1st, a new policy was enacted that indefinitely fixed the exchange rate of the *lev* to the German mark at a 1 – 1,000 ratio and stripped the National Bank of most of the prior responsibility regarding money lending to banks. See Wyzan 1998, 93-4.

[7] For more on the subject of jazz performance and cruise ships, see Greenland 2007.

combination of disposable income coupled with free time during the off-seasons, it can be argued, leave cruise ship musicians in a more advantageous position than most to engage in more esoteric or personally rewarding musical projects.

The irony is that the libratory potential for musical practice that was hoped for by many musicians after the transition to capitalism became more like a Weberian iron cage. In other words, one set of social tenets creating a music-making dystopia (socialist state patronage) was simply replaced by another (commodity fetishism), which left musicians caught in the middle as they tried to reconceptualize their place in the new orders of knowledge. The relatively stable employment available to professional musicians during the communist period gave way to the commodification of nearly every aspect of professional music, which created conflicts for musicians with career aspirations that transcend purely economic concerns. The ability to play whatever one wanted without state backlash did not guarantee venues open to playing such music, especially if performance wages were a musician's only means of income.

This complex of anxieties and desires that shaped the lives of professional musicians was mediated mainly via spaces through which narratives about musical life in post-communist Bulgaria were conceptualized and performed. If the importance of narrative is in "the question of the meaning of narrative itself – of narrativizing the world" (Stewart 1996, 30), then the space of such narratives becomes an important avenue through which the subject interprets the affects of modernity and mediates them. Casting cruise ship work as a *graveyard*, for example, becomes a framing of the relationships between capitalism, labor, and the subject, emphasizing the dystopic

possibilities of such work. A similar framing was emphasized when one musician told me bluntly that within twenty years the Bulgarian professional musician will be extinct, and hotels and resorts will either have to hire foreigners or rely solely on recorded music (personal communication 2009).

These narratives about agency and place within post-communist life are the other side of the urban affects that I discuss at length in Chapter 4. Social, political, economic, architectural, and spatial changes to the city of Sofia contributed to broad affects of boredom as a series of historically affective mechanisms on the subject. At the same time, the subjective conceptualization of these affects goes far beyond the confines of the city as a physical space. Sofia itself also becomes a symbol of modern life and all of the pleasures and travails. It is a place simultaneously lived in and imagined by both Sofians and non-Sofians, and ties together senses of history, self, and other into realms of possibility for living. The tensions inherent in negotiating these fractured realms are emphasized by Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps, who argue that:

> narrative is born out of such tension in that narrative activity seeks to bridge a self that felt and acted in the past, a self that feels and acts in the present, and an anticipated or hypothetical self that is projected to feel and act in some as yet unrealized moment – any one of which may be alienated from the other (Ochs and Capps 1996, 29).

Narratives frame history and the present into images, into objects, and into subject positions, piecing together "being" out of modernity's fractures. Narratives do the work that Anthony Giddens alludes to when he questions whether a fragmented self is disintegrating or integrating within the space of the encounter or the milieu (Giddens 1991, 190). Narratives are mechanisms of mediation through which subjects parse

through and reconstruct meaning (Stewart 1996, 29). Most importantly for jazz, narratives are improvisations that move beyond the scope of the musical, yet are every bit as composed from experiences, affects, and memories as the last solo one plays.

The story of the gig at the Czech Cultural Center that opens this chapter illustrates the ways in which musicians mediate new ways of being and resist the entrenchment of commodity fetishism in musical venues and spaces through narrative practices. These practices are a way of talking about and acting through these experiences that mirrors their discontent with having to place themselves within the commodity-rules Sofian music industry, coupled with the difficulties inherent in creating musical spaces of their own in urban Sofia. This conceptual space in which musicians construct narratives about themselves, their frustrations, and even the "dangers" of playing in Sofia becomes a shifting space of desire, the fluidity of subjectivities enacted by the very fracturing of experience that the city perpetuates. Through such narratives, notions and actualizations of boredom appear in the actions of the *metropolitan man* and the *flâneur* (see Chapter 4), as in the story about the pianist whose sense of self was gradually dissolved by the difficulties of playing in Sofia. These narratives frame ways for musicians to conceptualize Sofia's ontological gaps and slippages in order to avoid a similar fate, and avoid being trapped and subjectively worn down by the commodity apparatus of the post-communist city. At the same time, they also provide an epistemological gateway into the structures, affects, and politics that guide the practices of musicians. Elucidating these practices and their potential meanings is helpful in understanding the historical connections of post-communist jazz in the broader historical context of jazz in Bulgaria.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

I went to the Tea House once to see an Amsterdam-based Bulgarian pianist who was giving a few concerts during a week-long stay in Sofia, including a solo performance the next day at the National Radio. This particular pianist was one of the first generation of musicians to come of age after 1989, when the most stringent restrictions on travel and migration were lifted and more and more Bulgarians were studying and making careers abroad.

After the performance, I introduced myself and told him about my research – the history of jazz in Bulgaria, Bulgarian jazz musicians. He smiled, chuckled slightly, and then jokingly asked me if I was writing an article on "endangered species from around the world" for a magazine…

* * *

Vladimir Gadzhev, Bulgaria's foremost jazz critic and lecturer on jazz at New Bulgarian University in Sofia, was one of the first within Bulgaria to comment on the effect of the fractured musical industry on jazz production in the early post-communist period. In an article called "Sketches for a portrait of Bulgarian jazz through the 1990s" (*Zarisovki za portret na bulgarskiya dzhaz prez 90-te godini*), Gadzhev laments that during most of the 1990s the vast array of ex-patriot musicians living and working throughout Europe and the United States were attacked or virtually ignored by Bulgarian colleagues, leading to their reluctance to return to the country for any more than one to two concerts per year. "This truth," he continues, "explains another feature of the decade – the closure of regional frameworks of jazz, the limitation of existing contacts, and the absence of a higher artistic vision" (Gadzhev 2001, 45-46). Still, he does recognize the efforts of Leviev and vocalist Yildiz Ibrahimova periodically returning to Bulgaria to

play. He ultimately feels that the new generation of young labor migrants and students are more open and accepting to ex-patriot musicians, and thus revitalize a stale scene that was bereft of its best talent.

Gadzhev's piece, written in 2001, was a portent for other writings on jazz penned later in the decade that mirror this same sense of jaundiced optimism. Journalist and music critic Milen Panaiotov, in his review of the 2006 Ruse Jazz Festival for the newspaper "Culture" (*Kultura*), states that many of the people of Ruse "hav[ing] long had enough of the rampant dictation *chalga*" were engaging in a particular nostalgia for hearing the music of the ex-pats and their creative performances. He specifically singles out saxophonist Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov, who "in a well-known sense can be considered a foreign musician." At the same time, he is critical of the opening act of the festival, the BNR Big Band, for lacking the same kind of creativity and simply rehashing older styles. "Maybe," Panaiotov goes on to say, "if in Bulgaria we had at least one such makeup [as the ex-pat and foreign musicians], it would be more interesting for the public" (Panaiotov 2006, 8).

Viktor Lilov, founder of the independent label Messechina Music in 2007 and manager of some of the finest *ethnojazz* groups in Bulgaria (Ivo Papasov, Georgi Yanev, Karandila Gypsy Brass Band, Ikadem), mentioned the constant difficulties that he had in booking gigs for his musicians around Bulgaria, and in Sofia in particular. For example, he couldn't find any venues in Sofia willing to book Papasov even when waiving his standard booking fee (personal communication 2008). Lilov has since concentrated on finding his clients concerts in other parts of Europe, where they are often more readily

accepted. Karandila, in particular, has had a great deal of success playing pop and rock festivals throughout Europe employing the well-established trope of Balkan exoticism and otherness (hence the use of the title *Gypsy* Bass Band). Papasov and Yanev still carry a great deal of capital there from reputation alone, and for the last ten years a significant amount of their work has been abroad.[8]

Many of the musicians undertook an elaborate, self-deprecating rhetoric that seemed as much a performance as their music. As I got to know some of the musicians around Sofia when I came to concerts and gigs, they jokingly asked if I how my "search" for "Bulgarian jazz" was going, if I had found it, and if I had could I direct them to where exactly it had "been hiding". There was the "endangered species" comment from this section's opening vignette. One musician even lied to me about doing non-jazz gigs, which I exposed when I saw him play a show with a thrash-ska band opening for a group that I was playing with. More than just the usual "why are you studying us" rhetoric that many ethnographers face during the course of field study, this style of discourse about jazz reflects various desires and anxieties that occupy musicians about their experiences and careers. With the line between aesthetic and labor identities diffuse in everyday life, this self-deprecation in the face of a "scholar of jazz" takes the form of a hedge – a tactic to displace their own anxieties about being a jazz musician in the difficult labor realities of Sofia's highly-commercialized music scene.

[8] The most notable example is Ivo's 2004 tour of the United States with former *Trakiya* member and Brooklyn resident Yuri Yunakov, which led to the release of the album *Together Again* on the Traditional Crossroads label.

I heard similar sentiments from non-musicians throughout my stay, reinforcing the complex of lack that has surrounded the state of post-communist jazz. Most of these were variations of "there are no more jazz musicians here….they all left," which I heard from a litany of Sofians over the course of several months: a close friend in management at a lucrative Greek export company; the middle-aged manager of my apartment building; the legal assistant in her mid-20s that helped finish my visa paperwork. Most telling in this regard was an encounter with an opinionated Russian cab driver that spoke fluent English. Upon learning about what I was doing in Sofia, he educated me via a lengthy treatise about how wedding musicians were playing Bulgarian songs "too fast" and using "incorrect harmonizations," all while casually dodging traffic. As we reached my destination, he concluded that in his opinion there had not been any "original" jazz in Sofia for many years. When I pressed him to elaborate further, he vaguely responded that all the good musicians had left sometime in the 1990s, when "times were really bad" (personal communication 2008).

By making statements that there are no more jazz musicians, both musicians and non-musicians are expressing the social and allegorical depths of experience in post-communist Bulgaria. In social terms, this in some ways refers to the restructuring of meaning in being a professional musician after communism. To a larger degree, this touches on what Maria Stoilkova, qua Pierre Bourdieu, refers to as the "general collective disillusionment" that occurs when dramatic social transitions alienate those about to enter the labor force (Stoilkova 2005, 121). The quality of life in Bulgaria during the 1990s when the country was arguably in the worst economic crisis since just after the Second

World War was a source of disappointment to many Bulgarians, and referenced as such in these narratives. Much of this disappointment can be tied to the failures and excesses that created what Evegeni Peev referred to as "crony capitalism," where managerial behavior was trumped by short-sighted capital maximization of profit (Peev 2002). The practices needed to join the ranks of the *nouveau riches* during this period required, at best, a stretching of moral and ethical conduct in terms of state and local politics and commerce. Those either unwilling or unable to comply became either resentful at the lack of ethics under Bulgarian capitalism, or checked out entirely – leaving the country or other such drastic measures.

The out-migrating jazz musician became an allegory for such exploitation, as evident in the changes in the music industry, where producers constantly emphasized profit over quality in productions. Constructing allegory in this fashion follows closely with Bainard Cowen's concept of "the signs perceived [in allegory] strik[ing] notes at the depths of one's being, regardless of whether they point to heaven, to an irretrievable past, or to the grave" (Cowan 1981, 110). For the musicians themselves, as with many of Bulgaria's ordinary citizens, the idea of the jazz musician became wrapped up in a historical montage referencing a diverse array of signs – the US State Department jazz tours from the 1960s (see Chapter 3), cultural products referencing the "Imaginary West" of late socialism throughout the Soviet Block, and the burgeoning myth of America as the place where capitalism properly functions. Jazz musicians had "departed" in the eyes of the public, and musicians didn't self-identify exclusively as jazz musicians because conditions never warranted a place for them in the imagination about a new, inherently

flawed capitalist Bulgaria. Much in the same way that the statue of Sasho Sladura became the literal embodiment of a lost bourgeois generation in percept, the lost jazz musician becomes the embodiment of the inability to find a place for oneself the post-communist orders of knowledge and power.

These various social and allegorical complexes can be codified by an incident that occurred in February of 2009. I was invited to see a performance of a popular *ethnojazz* group called "Om" at the main library in Slaveikov Square. The group's vocalist that night was a doctoral student of Claire Levy's at BAS who was writing a dissertation on Chinese opera. After the performance I was introduced to Aleksandŭr Nushev, another musicology graduate student at BAS who ran an independent recording studio in an upstairs apartment not far from the center of Sofia. After discussing my project for a few minutes over drinks, he invited me to attend a recording session the next day featuring an *a cappella* saxophone quartet playing a mix of arrangements of jazz standards and some original compositions by a composer based in Plovdiv. The quartet had recently been formed by Petŭr Momchev were in the process of recording a demo album at the request of a friend of his who worked for BNR. The studio was confined to one small room in the apartment, meaning that the mixing board, microphones, musicians, engineer and I shared the same limited space. I watched the session from a chair squeezed between two speakers, facing the four saxophonists. On one of the takes of an arrangement of Duke Ellington's "Take the A-Train," tenor saxophonist Atanas Hadjiev was taking a solo during an extended section in the middle of the arrangement that was open for improvisations. At one point, attempting to turn around a complex run at the end of a

chorus, one of his fingers slipped off of a key on the lower stack of his saxophone. The resulting flub sounded remarkably like one of the note ornamentations that are a trait of many local and regional folk genres and subsequently ethnojazz. Almost immediately the take stopped because the musicians had broken into laughter. Momchev, through his reddened face, turned to me and exclaimed that he had "found" Bulgarian jazz for me.

Clearly, a sense of disenchantment with the possibilities of capitalist reform in Bulgaria had been developing in the minds of jazz players and enthusiasts during the 1990s, and still remains to this day. Much of this disenchantment was tied to the difficulty in finding suitable places for jazz performance within the difficult social and economic circumstances of that period, which was between venues acceptable to jazz and those that wished to remain lucrative. The narratives through which musicians talk about themselves, and how these narratives have been shaped by changes in the construction of social life and urban space in Bulgaria under capitalism is essential to understanding jazz in Bulgaria since 1989. The disaffection that marks the attitudes of Gadzhev and others toward jazz's place in Bulgarian musical life is still prevalent amongst many of the musicians in Sofia today.

OLD COMMUNISTS

At the behest of friends, I went to a concert of what could be described as "improvised electronica" in Sofia's Zaimov Park in the late Spring of 2009. A friend whom I played with in a ska/rocksteady group was playing keyboards. During the performance, I noticed that the bass player was his uncle, an accomplished jazz bassist with whom I had wanted to speak with for some time. My friend introduced us after the

concert, but our conversation was necessarily brief due to the weather and lack of time. Wanting to continue our conversation at a later date, I searched my memory for a potential meeting place in the summer since he emphasized he was spending a few months in Europe. The only possibility that came to mind was Bansko International Jazz Festival in August. So I asked him if he was going there, playing or otherwise, to what I thought was Bulgaria's largest "jazz" festival.

The man began chuckling, somewhat… perhaps "maniacally" is the word. "No", he responded, "I won't be playing there". Fair enough, but the why peaked my interest. When I asked for clarification, he responded with clear disdain for the festival management and their entire artistic program, branding them "old communists" and claiming that they cared little for even programming local artists since the festival's purpose was to front the summer tourist season in the mountain resort town that was known for winter activities. Performance was all about the money – payment for anyone but the headliners was embarrassingly low, the hotels local musicians were put up in were wholly inadequate. Often Sofian groups were shuttled away from the main stage where all the big-money foreign acts played. Bansko, it seemed, had nothing to do and wanted nothing to do with Bulgarian musicians. Based my observations and those of other musicians, most jazz festivals in the country were unfortunately the same.

* * *

Since the 1970s the "jazz festival" has been one of the few consistent spaces in which jazz has been performed in Bulgaria. The successes of Bulgarian groups like Jazz Focus 65 at European festivals, coupled with the popularity and financial windfall of Soviet jazz festivals like the one in Talin, Estonia, the Ministry of Education and Culture began to investigate the possibility of creating festivals in Bulgaria. By the early-1980s, there were several annual festivals in Sofia, Sopot, Ruse, and Gabrovo, with varying

success. Often these festivals were simply glorified concerts or concert series featuring reputable foreigners deemed "appropriate" by the Ministry for a Bulgarian audience.

What eventually became the post-communist jazz festival was based on the politics of several non-jazz music festivals in Bulgaria running in the late-1980s. The folk and wedding music festivals at Stambolovo and Koprivshtitsa showed how successful state-run music festivals intersecting with the money of the Bulgarian "second economy" could be (Rice 1994). The model continued into the early years of post-communism, when the lion's share of the money from the second economy was accumulated in the hands of former communist elites and the mafia. Their interests essentially coincided with those of the Ministry during the communist years – bringing in big name foreign acts to boost tourist presence and money. Small festivals for rock, pop, folk-pop *chalga*, and other styles developed throughout Bulgaria over the next ten years, often in the countryside or near the sea where the post-communist elite often spent the summer months. Ostentatious displays of wealth were common, to the point that a friend quipped that the only reason to go to such festivals was to "gaze at expensive automobiles or women with breast implants" (personal communication 2009).

The most popular festival that follows this model of organization is undoubtedly the International Jazz Festival in the town of Bansko. Nestled in the heart of the Pirin Mountains to the southeast of Sofia, Bansko developed as a popular winter resort during the 1960s where the mountains provided ideal skiing for communist elites. The festival was developed after Emil Iliev, a Bulgarian dermatologist and acupuncturist with a practice in Germany, opened a clinic in Bansko for patients from around Europe to

receive treatment while relaxing in the mountains during the temperate summer. Iliev decided that live music was ideal entertainment for the visitors, so plans were made to develop a festival. The first Bansko International Jazz Festival (BIJF) occurred in 1998, and has continued every year to the present during the second week of August. Pop-jazz artists from around Europe, like Dutch saxophonist Candy Dulfer, British vocalist Claire Teal, and German Axel Zwingenberger have been among the headliners. The festivals often include famous Bulgarian artists like Milcho Leviev, Teodosii Spassov, and pop singer Kamelia Todorova, while the BNR Big Band traditionally opens the first day. Smaller jazz acts, often groups from Sofia or Plovdiv, are booked to play engagements at restaurants and spas throughout the week.

From the very beginning, the BIJF was meant to play to the wealthy clientele visiting the clinic, though the festival soon grew into the lynchpin of full-fledged summer tourist industry. Thought BIJF has grown as the Municipality of Bansko has constructed more hotels and day spas to cater to increased tourist traffic, the music itself is of secondary importance, which has caused strife with many of the local musicians who played the festival. Ventsi Blagoev remarked in the same interview that BIJF had "an obvious contempt for Bulgarian musicians" (Toshkova 2010). When asked to explain further, he remarked,

> In the first place, [it's about] financial terms. 'You come, I will give you *kebabcheta*, you will sleep in my hotel….' They are offering some funny money, for which it is degrading that you toil…They think that working Bulgarian musicians have to be paid minimally. It has gotten like this: there are many big sponsors who give, for example, 15,000 euro for one group of brother Russians, but at the same time for a Bulgarian musician – 150 leva [77 euro]. Degrading.

> Because of this difference most Bulgarian jazz musicians shun playing at the festival in Bansko (ibid. 2010).

The use of *kebabche*, a link or patty of grilled meat popular in Bulgarian restaurants, is telling here. To be "paid in kebabche" has undeniable class and ethnic connotations that refer to Bulgaria's Roma population, who are often stereotyped as being willing to take *kebabcheta* (kebabs) as payment for anything from services rendered to votes in elections. Blagoev uses this here to emphasize a glaring class disparity between Bulgarian musicians playing the festival and the festival organizers. As in the vignette that opens this section with the conversation with the bass player, Blagoev worries about the lack of professional respect shown to all but the most famous Bulgarian musicians who play the festival.

My own visit to the Bansko festival in 2009 reinforced the opinions of both Blagoev and the anonymous bass player in my own mind. I traveled with several friends who were anxious for a weekend outside of Sofia during the hottest part of the summer. We planned to attend only the first day of the festival, and so I intended to see some acquaintances from Sofia play at one of the secondary stages at a hotel in the afternoon before going to the main stage that evening. Clearly, the stage was not meant to gather much attention, set up in a large grassy courtyard with no chairs in front. The only places to sit comfortably were around the large swimming pool or on the sunbathing deck. I found out that the group that I had come to see, a quartet led by bassist Vesselin Vesselinov-Eko, cancelled at the last minute. The cancelled group's place was taken by a band named "High Time," an acid jazz trio from Sofia I had heard of through friends.

Their set was very solid, but they failed to garner much attention from the hotel patrons. Most seemed content to continue sunbathing, swimming, or taking advantage of the hotel's spa.

The main stage for the festival, located in the town's center square, was crowded for the evening concerts. The first twenty minutes of the opening ceremony were occupied by lengthy speeches by the festival coordinator and the Mayor of Bansko, lionizing the efforts made in building the festival and bringing such distinguished artists to play there. The headliner that year was Bulgarian pianist Mario Stanchev, who immigrated to France in the early-1980s and had been playing there ever since. His concert was not until the third night, however. The BNR Big Band, the traditional openers of the festival, was playing the next night because of a scheduling conflict. In their place was an amateur big band from Blagoevgrad, who played an assortment of jazz standards and pop hits like "Copa Cabana" and "Zoot Suit Riot." Next came British vocalist Claire Teal's band, a solidly professional band whose repertoire consisted of songs by Jobim and original compositions best described as a light pop samba.

I could understand the frustrations of Blagoev and others toward the BIJF. High Time was, in my judgment, clearly the best group that played that day, but their presence on such an out-of-the-way stage prevented them from garnering more of an audience. The Bulgarian artists at the festival (excluding Stanchev) were subject to the worst kind of employment patronization. Their presence was felt as a necessity to keep a Bulgarian appearance at the festival, as opposed to being an integral part of the image perpetuated

by BIJF. As with the cruise ships, the musicians at Bansko were laborers first and musicians a distant second.

While BIJF is one example of a festival catering specifically toward the tourist industry, others are more in dialogue with aesthetic concerns. One of the more prominent festivals geared specifically toward showcasing Bulgarian jazz musicians from the very beginning is the International Jazz Festival at Varna Summer, which has taken place in the Black Sea port of Varna every August since 1992. More so that the BIJF, Varna Summer's promoters seek to create better performance conditions for Bulgarian musicians living abroad to entice them back as often as possible. Varna Summer has been one of the few festivals to consistently accomplish this over the last twenty years. The festival was the creation of Anatoli Vapirov, a saxophonist and composer whose personal history is rife with circumstance and fortitude. He was born in Berdyansk, Ukraine in 1947 to a Bulgarian father and Ukranian mother.[9] Because of discrimination in the Soviet Union in the 1950s and 60s toward what Vapirov refers to as "rarer ethnicities," his mother hid his half-Bulgarian side from him until he was much older.[10] In fact Vapirov mentions in an interview that "without knowing that I am half-Bulgarian,

[9] Vapirov stated that his ancestors were from the region around Yambol in Bulgarian Thrace, and had emigrated to the area in the 18th century to escape Ottoman rule and were granted land near the Sea of Azov by Catherine the Great. I have yet to find evidence of when during Catherine's reign this emigration might have occurred, but likely it happened soon after 1774, when the Treaty of Kutschuk Kainardzhi ceded control of the Azov region from the Ottoman Empire to Russia. The land grants were likely a reward for participation on the Russian side against the Ottomans to people who likely faced Ottoman reprisals had they stayed in Bulgaria at the conclusion of the Russo-Turkish War (1768-74).

[10] The story becomes even more complex. Vapirov found out later (via an old photograph) that his father had another family in Ukraine before the war, and that he had a half-sister via this second family. He searched for her casually, not knowing if she had been uprooted to Siberia during the Stalin years, as was common for many Tatars and Bulgarians. After many years, a former neighbor told him offhandedly that his half-sister still lived in the Moldavian city of Tiraspol, so he arranged to meet her while on a concert tour of Moldavia in the capitol of Kishinev (Gadzhev 2007).

for my first LP for [the Soviet state record label] *Melodiya*, I recorded a piece called 'Bulgarian Rondo.' Now I understand that it had not been by accident" (Gadzhev 2007).

While still unaware of his true background, Vapirov became interested in jazz after hearing Willis Conover speak at the Talin Jazz Festival in 1967, and upon graduation from high school he studied composition and improvisation at the Leningrad Conservatory. In the 1970s he quickly embedded himself within the avant-garde scene in the city, along with famed Lithuanian pianist Vyacheslav Ganelin and others. By the mid-1980s, Vapirov was aware of his father's heritage, and with *perestroika* firmly rooted in Soviet ideology, he decided to make the move to Bulgaria in 1986, settling in Varna. He almost immediately became involved with the Varna Summer International Music Festival. The festival grew from a series of yearly concerts in Varna, the first in 1926. After several hiatuses in the mid-1930s and during World War II, the festival was renamed Varna Summer in 1966, and became one of the premiere festivals for Western art music in Southeastern Europe by the late-1980s. Varna Summer offered an outlet for many of his pieces incorporating instrumentation and musical elements of jazz and art music. Vapirov approached the organizers in the early-1990s about creating a stage for jazz at Varna Summer, and arrangements were made to hold the first jazz portion of the festival in 1992. He insisted on booking young Bulgarian groups like Antoni Donchev's *Acoustic Version* (*Akustichna Versiya*), the Zachariev/Toskov Duo, and the Teodosii Spassov Band to go along with European headliners like saxophonist John Surman and trombonist Alan Tomlinson. This not only gave young Bulgarian artists a summer outlet for their music, but also brought their music to the attention to people like Surman at a

time when the recording industry and travel funding from the government were still in flux after the Transition.

Serving as the jazz festival's creative director until 2005, Vapirov not only made a concerted effort to keep the best homegrown jazz artist in the festival program, but he was instrumental in rescuing the communist-era jazz festival from collapsing into nothingness. Yordan Rupchev's address at the Second festival in 1993 captures some of the hope that many musicians had for the festival as a long-awaited outlet for jazz amidst the hard early years after 1989.[11] He stated:

> "We kept waiting, we kept waiting for quite a time, and at last we saw it coming." It was with these words that Anatoly Vapirov gave jazz the go-ahead in the packed Festival Center exactly one year and two days ago. His dream of bringing about a jazz festival in his own image, no matter how remote the northern lights of St. Petersburg might be, came true. Sunny Varna turned out to be more hospitable. And we too lived long enough to see an international jazz festival by the sea in August. Like Nice and Newport.[12]
>
> We'll continue in the thought, that, at least, Varna became incorporated in the chain of jazz events boosting homebred jazz, and that at a critical time, when Sopot and Gabrovo only with great effort find strength to keep up the flame, and the Sofia International Jazz Meeting is practically in the state of financial knockdown, of which no one knows if it will recover at all.
>
> It is for this reason that it was so important to have jazz accepted within the "Varna Summer" itinerary. And, moreover, to have accepted the conception of a different festival - in Bulgarian terms, of course - that is one emphasizing on the liberated, contemporary, self-conceived jazz, a festival that would bring together musicians from various countries and of various generations, united by comparable musical concepts.
>
> If God willing, the organizers were to succeed in carrying into effect all their intentions, then a larger world might be perceived from the height of the second "Varna Summer Jazz" stage, and musicians might feel more at home. And the audience would continue to look up and every year it would be back again to

[11] The address is published on the Varna Summer International Jazz Festival website, along with introductions from every year through 2004.

[12] These are references to the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island and the Nice Jazz Festival in France, two of the most world-renown summer events for jazz.

> listen to their favorite artists. I would like to believe that we'll live long enough to see that too! (Rupchev 1993)

Even by the 19th edition of the Festival, held in July 2010, Bulgarian-led groups held an important place in the three-day event. Each day was split into a concert with Bulgarian artist(s) and a concert with foreign artists (Georgi Kornazov Quartet/Villu Veski Nordic Sounds Trio; Prozorov-Neselovski Duo/Jens Winther European Quartet; Dino Rangel Trio/Yotsov-Yankoulov-Toskov Percussion Impact Project). Kornazov (France) and Prozorov (Austria) live and work outside of Bulgaria.

The successes of the festivals in Bansko and Varna since the early-1990s have spawned a host of spring and summer festivals all over the country. Many of them have followed Bansko's lead and concentrated on booking more expensive international acts aimed at creating and maintaining a summer tourist boom for restaurants and hotels. There are some festivals, however, that have followed the lead of Varna Summer more closely and focused on creating interesting and diverse lineups of musicians, rather than just focusing on the tourist aspect.

July Jazz Smolyan is one recently formed festival that has sought to build upon Varna Summer's example of creating a musically diverse program. Founded in 2006 by the July Jazz Foundation, the two-week "ethno-jazz" festival takes place in the amphitheater in the center of Smolyan and combines a litany of concerts, workshops, and film exhibitions with the goal of "interpretation of ethnic issues arising from a specific cultural reality" as stated on the Festival's website. Whatever many ways this phrase can be interpreted, in practice the festival uses "improvisation" as a lynchpin to create a

diverse lineup of Bulgarian and non-Bulgarian musicians to create a plurality of styles. In this vein July Jazz Smolyan has been one of the first festivals to branch outside of usual European circles and pull in groups with improvisational techniques from all over the world. For example, the 2009 festival featured workshops and concerts from marimbist Tatyana Koleva (Bulgaria), singers Deborah Carter (US) and Omar Ka (Senegal), percussionist Afra Mussawisade (Iran) and guitarist Melih Guzel (Turkey). But there was also a workshop in break dancing put on by Sleepwalkin' Crew, a beatbox workshop with Sofia's SKiller, and even a workshop in iconography with Stefka Nikolova. Jazz July Smolyan's organizers are clearly intent on altering the decades-old codes of presentation in what jazz festivals are, and have been instrumental in spawning younger, equally cosmopolitan organizations in other parts of Bulgaria such as Sofia's Alarma Punk Jazz.

In the face of problems such as lack of funding, lack of audience interest, and lack of cooperation from musicians, festivals like Varna Summer and July Jazz Smolyan have incorporated different strategies in order to succeed. While Varna Summer has followed the artistic vision of Vapirov to create a space in which the small cadre of jazz musicians in Bulgaria can perform with foreign artists, July Jazz Smolyan has expanded the festival's scope to include a wide variety of non-musical artisans and performers to diversify the festival audience. Despite the different focuses, both festivals share one aspect in common. As with venues in Sofia like the "Tea House," the strategies by festival coordinators to resist the allure of the commodity fetishism so prevalent in the BIJF are inherently double-edged. Distanciation from those allures requires an

embracing of them to some degree, as a kind of resistance. For musicians, this practice is already a part of their professional milieu as part of playing in Bulgarian urban clubs and concert venues. Much like their predecessors all the way back to the 1930s, jazz musicians in Bulgaria form a relationship with the places in which they play, and negotiating the politics of those venues is part of the historical linkage between musicians of different generations.

THE BEST MUSICIAN HE WAS CAPABLE OF BECOMING

I had wanted to talk with Mitko Liolev for some time. Besides being one of the best young Bulgarian jazz saxophonists and a personal favorite of mine, he was unique in one other regard from his contemporaries. After finishing a degree in music from the Prinz Klaus Conservatoire in Groningen, The Netherlands, he returned to Bulgaria to continue his career instead of staying abroad. Moving to back to his home town of Plovdiv, Liolev set up a private studio for saxophonists in the city and played concerts all over Bulgaria in his spare time. This was, another musician told me, after he had established a fine professional reputation in Amsterdam and had more than enough lucrative opportunities for gigs.

So many other jazz musicians who had gone abroad to study in the late-1990s and early-2000s had permanently migrated to Western Europe and the US to take advantage of their contacts made during the course of their study. What made Mitko so intent on returning after making the effort to leave in the first place, and why hadn't he taken the opportunity to return to The Netherlands or elsewhere in the years since?

My chance to speak with him came after the saxophone octet concert in July. With most of the usual concert-goers away from Sofia for the summer, the club was sparsely crowded. Access to the musicians was easy, so I had my friend Mitaka (another saxophonist) introduce us after the show. Although I had actually met Liolev at "Tea House" briefly the previous year, he didn't remember me. We chatted for a short time,

but the club was getting ready to close. Wanting to continue, he invited me back to the apartment of bassist Dimitŭr Karamfilov, where he was spending the night before departing Sofia for a festival the next morning. This was as good an opportunity I could hope for – meeting at a private residence over grocery store sandwiches and rakia.[13] *The kinds of casual post-gig spaces where frustrations unfurl and desires become more transparent.*

After stopping at an open store from some much-needed supplies, our car was waved over to the side by a police checkpoint. Apparently, one of the taillights was not functioning correctly, and so we had around twenty minutes to pass as the driver negotiated with the police officers. Mitko turned to me from the front seat and asked what I wanted to know about his education, which was the topic we stopped with earlier at the club. Now was the chance to ask my burning question about why he came back, shunning opportunities in Western Europe for the uncertainty of post-communist Bulgaria.

His answer to my question was double-edged. Mitko had left in the first place because, as he said, he had learned all he could about jazz from the educational apparatuses in Bulgaria. If he were to grow as a musician, he must broaden his abilities by studying with the best teachers and playing with the best musicians that he could find. Such growth was not just a necessity for professional development, but a deep desire to hone his skills and craft himself into the best musician he was capable of becoming. That was what took him the Groningen. And make the finals of the 2004 Dutch Jazz Competition, perform at the prestigious North Sea Jazz Festival, win second prize for soloist at the Leidse Stad Jazz Competition, and be nominated for the Harten Aas Jazz Award. What mattered were not the accolades themselves, but the self-becoming the accolades referenced.

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[13] *Rakia* is a brandy distilled from fruit popular throughout the Balkans. In Bulgaria, the most popular mass-produced brands are typically made of plum (Burgas 63, for example) or grape. "Village rakia" (*sela rakiya*) if often made which whatever fruit has fallen from trees at the end of the summer (apples, peaches) and is typically of much stronger alcohol content, sometimes upwards of 70%.

And as for what brought him back? Well, it is much easier to have a wife and raise a young son as a musician in Bulgaria than in The Netherlands…

* * *

The quandary of the liberalization of Bulgarian markets after 1989 is that while this process has opened up opportunities for many who seek higher education, the institutions in Bulgaria lack quality programs and funding to produce competitive workers in global markets. Kristen Ghodsee, in her examination of women in the tourism industry in Bulgaria, has argued that access to higher education and language skills have become the new delineators of cultural capital in the post-communist period (Ghodsee 2005, 16-17). The college diploma has, in essence, replaced the party membership as the gateway to personal success. More and more students are seeking these educational opportunities outside of Bulgaria, as evident in a report by the European Commission released in 2008 on attainment of educational benchmarks set by the Lisbon Objectives in 2000. According to the report, by 2006 8.9% of students were enrolled in universities outside of Bulgaria, as opposed to only 3.2% in 2000 (CEC 2008), one of the most significant 6-year increases amongst European states. This figure definitively shows the growth in the number of Bulgarians seeking educational opportunites elsewhere. Emigration, while on one hand seen as a sign of discontent with the educational situation in Bulgarian universities, must also be seen in conjunction with the desire to attain the best education possible for utilization within an ever-competitive job market.

The easing of restrictions on travel and emigration to other parts of Europe has made attending a school outside of Bulgaria easier, a practice almost unheard of during the communist period. Simultaneously, such easing has led to an exodus of many of the most qualified students and teachers. Both students and professors found better scholarships and salaries, access to research stipends, and, for students, more viable opportunities within the work force after graduation. Bulgarian universities are thus left without their best faculty and students to raise the reputation of its institutions. The pervasiveness of the problem was evident in the fact that as of 2011 no Bulgarian university was ranked in either the top 500 worldwide of the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) or in the top 100 of the World University Ranking (ibid. 70). In addition, between 2000 and 2006, the number of students attending college at Bulgarian institutions dropped by 1.2%, and the number of graduates dropped by 0.5%. So even though access to higher education in Bulgaria had increased for a larger portion of the population after 1989, the overall quality of education had suffered.

The lack of adequate funding for Bulgarian universities has been a concern during the post-communist period and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. There are exceptions, like Blagoevgrad's American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), which since its inception in 1991 has been supported mostly by endowments from the US Agency for International Development and the Soros Foundation. In fact, the private liberal arts school recently received a $1M grant from the America for Bulgaria association to fund 10 full and 60 partial scholarships for students in the 2010 year, with partial scholarships covering 30% of the tuition cost. Also, since 1992 Sofia University has been among the

Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF) fellows receiving an endowment from the Nippon Foundation in Japan. These, however, seem to be the exceptions, especially given that Bulgaria's spending on higher education was only 0.81% of the GDP in 2004, one of the lowest amongst European states (ibid. 71).

The problems in funding underscore the fact that Bulgarian universities, no longer the exclusive training ground of the communist elites, have become businesses unto themselves, with all of the funding concerns that schools in such positions have. The quality of the education that they have offered since 1989 is contingent on the amount of funding available to them at the institutional level from endowments and alumni donations. Several friends of mine living in Sofia often complained about the quality of education they were getting at Bulgarian universities, where practices such as bribing teachers for grades occurred. The culture behind this practice goes back to the communist period, when positions within the bureaucratic apparatus were awarded based on certification within a particular field. Certification, as well as political connections, was key to finding employment within the communist regime. How this certification was achieved was of less importance, and so cheating and bribery were tolerated, if not outright encouraged at some universities (Miller 1998, 128-29).

While Jeffrey Miller is perhaps correct in surmising that such practices institutionalized a sense of dishonesty that alters the perception of ethics in everyday dealings, a more likely explanation was that potential students became wary and distrustful of the quality of education received in Bulgarian universities. Perhaps telling was that in a survey of Bulgarian students taken in the year 2000, 85% expressed a desire

to live elsewhere at some point in their lives (Adnanes 2004, 797). More and more young Bulgarians spend at least some of their lifetime abroad for work or study, including music students. The centers of higher education in the arts experience the same problems as other institutions of higher education in Bulgaria.

At present, there are seven institutions of higher education that offer advanced studies in musical arts. The two arts academies, The "Pancho Vladigerov" National Academy of Music in Sofia (NAM) and the Academy of Music and Dance in Plovdiv (AMD), offer the most comprehensive training of the seven. NAM is the only music school to offer programs in theory, composition, and conducting, in addition to vocal and instrumental pedagogy. In addition to pedagogy, AMD offers programs in folklore and folk dance correography. Five other schools, including three public universities (Sofia University 'Sv. Kliment Ohridski'; South-West University 'Neofit Rilski', Blagoevgrad; Veliko Tarnovo University 'Sv. Kiril i Metodii', Veliko Tarnovo) and two private schools (New Bulgarian University, Sofia and Free University, Varna) offer mostly pedagogical and education programs. Since 2004, the institutions offering degrees in music education have instituted accredidation protocols similar to those in other European countries. As of 2009, however, this accrediation is not recognized anywhere outside of Bulgaria, leaving graduates with few options for teaching outside of the country.

Very few of these schools offered comprehensive training in jazz performance, pedagogy, or composition, and none offered degrees with these emphases. Curriculums were mostly concerned with classical performance and, to a lesser extent, folk performance, both holdovers from the established musical curriculums of the State

Conservatory and other musical institutions of the communist period. These curriculums have been slow to change in the post-communist era and, in the minds of many students, seemed to be a hindrance to their future professional success in a competitive musical labor market.

Worse yet, facilities at many places were in a state of constant disrepair, especially in the public universities. Paint and plaster were peeling off of walls, percussion equipment was missing pieces, and rooms were missing doors entirely. The building of the School of Music attached to Sofia University, located to the east of the main building near Hotel Pliska, was in particularly bad shape when I visited there in November 2008. Whole sections of the building lacked functioning electricity. The facilities at private New Bulgarian University fared much better, though certain parts of the building were under construction constantly. Piles of rubble and pulverized drywall surrounded the basement room where I met students to play, although the room itself and the equipment inside were in fine shape.

Most of the attempts to improve the state of jazz education in Bulgaria have been private endeavors by professional musicians themselves. One notable example is the yearly Summer Music Academy offered by pianist Milcho Leviev and vocalist Vicki Almazidu through New Bulgarian University (NBU). Established in 1999 as a week-long masterclass, the Summer Music Academy gives the opportunity for young musicians to study directly with two internationally-renown musicians on pedagogical and aesthetic issues on improvisation that are not covered in the normal curriculum at NBU or elsewhere. Admission to the masterclass is by audition, from which Leviev himself

selects 8-12 participants. Those chosen receive a certificate from NBU and participate in a Gala Concert with Leviev and Almazidu, usually in Ceremonial Hall at NBU. The top musician of the Academy is given a scholarship for musical study funded by the Milcho Leviev/Vicki Almazidu Fund, as well as the potential for professional contracts brokered through NBU.

The 2009 incarnation of the Academy combined for the first time the Leviev (instrumental) and Almazidu (vocal) masterclasses into a single collaborative effort that emphasized improvisation from various musical genres. This curriculum included a new emphasis on improvisational traditions from outside of the jazz canon, including those of Balkan folk and Western art traditions. The program was certainly a reflection on Leviev's aesthetic philosophy, as his own music has always pushed genre boundaries through the incorporation of Balkan folk elements and composition techniques from the Baroque period of European art music. But the masterclass was also aimed at preparing the students for lives as professionals abroad, where stylistic plurality can mean the difference between a comfortable lifestyle as a musician and difficult living circumstances.

A more recent attempt to promote jazz education through masterclasses and concerts in the style of the Leviev/Almazidu Masterclass is Ventsi Blagoev's "Live Zara Jazz," a program established in Stara Zagora in August of 2009. As opposed Leviev and Almazidu's annual program, Live Zara Jazz presents concerts every month in the state-of-the-art hall of the *Zaharizh Knyazhevski* City Library, which seats up to 100 people within the library's walls. The concerts were formed as the lynchpin of program of the

ZaraArts Association, which was formed in 2009 to promote access to the Arts for the people of Stara Zagora and the surrounding towns and villages. Seizing the opportunity to create a new locale for jazz performance outside of Sofia, Blagoev approached Association member Snezhana Marinova, the head of the library, about putting on a regular concert series at the new space (Bezovska 2010). The series is very popular in Stara Zagora, and will hold its 17th installment in January 2011 with the Dimitrovgrad Acoustic Trio. Funded directly from the Municipality of Stara Zagora, the series is able to bring a wide variety of musicians from Bulgaria and, occasionally, abroad. [14] Foreign artists have included Paris-based Mario Stanchev, New York-based Plamen Karadonev, and Belgian saxophonist Bernard Guyot

What makes Live Zara Jazz so distinct in its educational aspect is the way in which the series brings together musicians and the general public. Pre-and-post concert masterclasses are open to anyone. Some sessions have been geared specifically toward educating local children about how instruments work and giving them the opportunity to experiment with correct embouchures for brass instruments, or hitting a snare drum with drumsticks. Blagoev's project is motivated by his desire to interest Bulgarian children in music and to provide developing musicians opportunities to dialogue with professionals and experience creative outlets on their own. More than getting children interested in music, it may ultimately solve the problem of "labor shortage" discussed earlier in this chapter, as more young Bulgarians see careers in music as a potential opportunity.

[14] Marinova mentions that ZaraArts has investigated applying for EU project funding in order to expand the scope of the concert series, bring in a wider range of artists, and perhaps create a yearly festival under the Live Zara Jazz banner.

The lack of comprehensive education programs in music in Bulgaria, as well as the fact they are often underfunded, understaffed, and lack proper equipment, has caused many potential music students to seek opportunities abroad. Lubo Alexandrov, a Montreal-based guitarist and leader of the band *Kaba Horo*, undertook graduate study at the University of Montreal in jazz performance. Pianist Asen Doykin followed Georgi Donchev in attending the Berklee School of Music in the mid-1990s before settling in New York. Saxophonist Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov studied at Hamburg's *Hochschule für Musik und Theater* and Berlin's *Hochschule für Musik "Hanns Eisler"* after leaving Bulgaria in the early-2000s. In each case, these musicians sought more comprehensive training and musical development abroad from schools that offered connections with other musicians from around the world. These contacts and interactions, similar to what Thomas Turino refers to as "cosmopolitan loops," are the lifeblood of the interactions for musicians (Turino 2000, 8). These "loops" are important in that they serve a dual purpose: the actualization of labor opportunity in urban centers, and the promise of aesthetic exchange that develops musical subjectivity to the fullest potential. The ability to interact and learn from as many musicians as possible in an open environment develops the most important musical skill of the professional – the skill of plurality, of developing into a complete, cosmopolitan musician. Seeking this plurality has led many musicians outside of Bulgaria's borders in a quest to find a space in which to cultivate these skills. As Liolev emphasized when I spoke with him, the plurality of opportunities to make himself into a better musician was the driving force in leaving the labor and commodity cycles of the Bulgarian music scene as a younger man.

The "New York comes to Groningen" program (NYCTG), offered through the Prince Klaus Conservatory (PCC) at the *Hanzehogeschool* Groningen in the Netherlands, creates a space through which Bulgarian musicians can learn techniques and dialogue with musicians from other countries in ways difficult to replicate currently in Bulgaria. Created in 2001, NYCTG offers the experience of learning from a faculty of eight New York-based musicians such as Don Braden and Conrad Herwig on rotating, weeklong residencies. The goal of the program is to provide a performance-intensive environment through which students learn pedagogical, theoretical, and business acumen from the experience of the teachers as professional jazz musicians. In other words, the goal of the NYCTG program is to create an environment in which students learn how to become professional musicians based on a labor-specific interpretation of jazz. Recent Bulgarian graduates of the NYCTG program are the aforementioned Dimitar Liolev and pianist Anton Bodurov, both of whom have gone on to successful musical careers in Plovdiv and Amsterdam respectively.

The musical education of Alex Logozarov, a young jazz guitarist whom I met during the early stages of my field research in Bulgaria in 2008, demonstrates the importance programs like NYCTG hold for young Bulgarian musicians wishing to further develop their musical skills. I met Alex in late November 2008 at the gala concert for the Leviev/Almazidu master class at the Bulgaria Hall in Sofia. We quickly became good friends, mostly through our mutual musical interests (we bonded over the late-70s progressive rock band Toto) and our desire to collaborate musically living in a city where such opportunities were rare for both of us. I knew very few musicians at that point, and

he provided me with invaluable perspective on my work through his experiences as both a music student and a professional musician.

Born in Sofia in 1987, Alex belongs to the generation of young Bulgarians with no active recollection of the communist period and the complex social codes revolving around objects of "Western" or "bourgeois" origin. He thus recalled very little restriction in terms of what styles were available to him as a teenager. He began playing guitar in high school and was active playing in various rock and heavy metal bands, both popular styles for young musicians to play since the mid-1980s. During this time he started experimenting with jazz styles after a friend introduced him to some CDs by famous musicians such as Wes Montgomery. After graduating from high school he enrolled in the music program in New Bulgarian University (NBU), but dropped out after two years and began playing freelance NBU because he was frustrated with the quality of education he was getting, and felt that he could learn more productively on his own. Most his work after leaving school has consisted of pop gigs at piano bars in Sofia and clubs in resort towns in the mountains and on the Black Sea coast. The repertoire of the group consisted of a mix of American pop and rock songs, jazz standards, and various Bulgarian and Russian pop songs. Depending on the venue and location certain styles were emphasized, while others were left out completely. Although he made enough money to subsist by playing these gigs in piano bars, he desired to return to school in order to further cultivate his musical skills and perhaps eventually find work abroad as musicians. This desire is what led him to search for a music program to continue his studies, something Alex felt he couldn't find in Bulgaria.

Alex's lack of confidence in the musical education at Bulgarian universities led him to save money and investigate the possibility of studying music abroad, as Liolev, Bodurov, and others had done. Two other Bulgarian musicians were set to join him. One was vocalist Lilly Ilieva, Alex's girlfriend and partner in the piano bar group. The second was drummer Stefan Goranov, another student from NBU and a frequent musical collaborator. After months of researching institutions throughout Europe, the three collectively decided to audition at two schools: the PCC in Groningen and the Amsterdam Conservatory of Music. All three were accepted to the program at PCC, and in September 2009 they left Bulgaria to begin their studies abroad in the "New York meets Groningen" program. Their first few months in Groningen were difficult, as labor restrictions on Bulgarian émigrés by the Dutch government left them little recourse in finding work to help pay for tuition. For some time Alex, Lilly, and Stefan had to consider the possibility of moving back to Bulgaria after one semester due to financial troubles. By Spring 2010, the three were making enough money playing at restaurants around the city to make ends meet and stay enrolled.

Within a year, the contacts that Alex and his friends made in the "New York Comes to Groningen" program have produced fruitful musical collaborations both within the school and outside of the institution. In 2010, Alex and Stefan began a guitar trio project called "Space Cadillac" with Cameroonian bassist Benson Itoe, a fellow PCC student. The trio has become a compositional outlet for Alex, cultivating the writing skills that he began to experiment with during the time that I knew him in Bulgaria. At the same time, he and the other members of the band embrace the collaborative

possibilities of performance and the wide range of musical influences that each member brings. These values are highly emphasized in a short essay written by Alex for the trio's Facebook page.

> "Space Cadillac" is a modern guitar trio seeking for experimental approach of the trio setting. The concept of this international group of young musicians is to bring together their own musical experiences which vary from the classical folk musics of their home countries (Bulgaria and Cameroon), through rock, reggae, funk, blues to the style they presently have dedicated their time to study and explore – jazz. The idea behind this project is that each member has an equal contribution as any other and all three have the freedom to compose and arrange the compositions of the other two. The band approaches the material as a collective and a lot of the arrangements and the ideas come from jamming and live performing. This way the band has its own tight and recognizable sound.

Alex has emphasized to me in conversations that the program at PCC has been invaluable for his musical development. He not only learned from master teachers and polish his technical skills at an accelerated pace, but given him new philosophies on the very meaning of making music. These have all become integral parts of his musical self during his studies. Perhaps most importantly, he has stressed that while his "physical" skills may have developed at the same pace, his musical worldview could not developed in the same way had he stayed in Bulgaria. The opportunity to interact on a daily basis with musicians from all over the world was the driving force behind Alex's move to the Netherlands, as was for many other Bulgarian musicians wishing to study in the years after 1989.

CONCLUSION

Bulgarian musicians shape their subjectivities in post-communist Bulgaria in part through the performing of narratives. Narratives, in essence, elucidate the "structures of

feeling" that surround musicians' social, political, and economic happenstances (Williams 1977, 132). Narratives help musicians place themselves into contemporary situations and ideas, giving them avenues with which to realize the potential of agency. At this same time, they are also referential, enacting multiple histories upon which musicians engage with and draw upon as they actualize their fragmented subjectivities. The histories that musicians put together as a montage contextualize their own places with post-communist Bulgaria, while linking those musicians ontologically with their forbearers in the practice of carving out a place for the self amidst the affects of the city and modernity.

Much like the historical boredoms and fascinations that crop up throughout this work, the narrative montage creates a space through which subjectivities can be recovered from the "shock of the new" and offer refuge in the lived intensities of the present. Short lived though this refuge may ultimately be. Within the abstracted affects of the city, historical baggage and all, there is perhaps only boredom through which to recover oneself. Through narrative, subjects can employ historical montage as an avenue of temporary self-recovery as well through placing themselves within historical fields and objects. Moving toward the level of the intersubjective engagement in moments – the practice room, the bandstand, the recording session – another series of affects work in construction of the subject. The next chapter explores this type of engagement with the moment of performance, how the engagement more broadly ties together an aesthetics of jazz performance for Bulgarian musicians, and how the engagement through performance

between agents and objects of affect-ion may elucidate the ever-present problem of cross-cultural musical collaboration in ethnomusicological scholarship.

Chapter 6: Objects of Affect-tion: Intersubjectivity, Fascination, and an Aesthetics of "Crafting" in Jazz Performance

After Milcho Leviev left Bulgaria for the last time in 1971, he settled in West Germany playing in the quartet of avant-garde trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff. Don Ellis, in need of pianist for his band, remembered that Leviev had recently emigrated and was looking for work. So he arranged to bring Leviev to Los Angeles and begin a fruitful career in the US for the pianist. The movements that brought their careers together as musicians and colleagues speak to the motives that spur the fascination that is imbedded within the lives and stories of the musicians themselves. Here is what Leviev says about Ellis in an interview from the early-2000s, more than twenty years after Ellis's untimely death.

> The biggest impression a jazz musician had on me between 1955 (the year I started listening to jazz) and 1970, was Don Ellis. His orchestra was the first jazz group I saw in America, not only saw, but had the pleasure to occupy its keyboard chair for 7 years. I'll say one thing about Don: he could play New Orleans jazz as good as Wynton [Marsalis], (if not better), but his musicality led him to new, unexplored things with the time elements in music. He studied the folk music of India, Turkey, Bulgaria, and achieved highest results in terms of swinging, and grooving on odd meters. So, imagine what this was for me: a dream come true. I not only played, I wrote for the band. We recorded a double disk LP, "Tears of Joy", live in 1971… - a lot of our highest quality music was played then (Levy 2005, 27).

Ellis's opinions on Leviev as a musician carried the same kind of weight, a combination of mutual professional respect coupled with the intense fascination with Milcho's musical sensibilities and how his distinct sense of musicality meshed with the

other members of the band. Ellis wrote at length about Leviev's arrival in Los Angeles in his rhythmic textbook called *The New Rhythm Book*, published in 1972.[1]

> When my pianist left the [Don Ellis Big Band], I asked Milcho (who was then living in West Germany, if he would like to join the band. He accepted my offer – and six months later (after reams of government red tape) he flew into Los Angeles, stepped off the airplane into a waiting car, and was whisked to a rehearsal (already in progress) of my band. He sat down at the piano and proceeded to amaze the whole band. He has been a creative spark plug ever since. This is probably the first time in history a major jazz musician has come to the fore whose native and natural rhythms are the 'new' time signatures (Fenlon 2002, 49-50).

The idea of "rhythmic essences" was one of the more well known aspects of Ellis's musical thought. While there are grounds to critique such an essentializing perspective on the subject, Ellis' passage does give us an example of the complex mystification of selves between musicians, and how these mystifications are enacted through discourse. For one, the setting that Ellis paints for Leviev's arrival is couched in dalliances of the magical – being "whisked" from the airport and placed into an ongoing rehearsal. He then "amazes" the whole band in a flash of virtuosity, becoming a "creative spark plug" and instantaneously adding something to the group's creative impulses. There is almost an air of wizardry in the description, as if Leviev flew himself and dazzled the ears of the unsuspecting members of the Ellis Band.

One could certainly argue that Ellis's passage about Leviev fits more broadly into discourses about exoticism and the "magical" quality of Bulgarian music and musicians

[1] *The New Rhythm Book* includes a supplemental chapter on Eastern European rhythms and time signatures written by Leviev shortly after his arrival in the US and collaboration with the Ellis Big Band.

grasped onto by Western audiences.[2] His emphasis on "native and natural rhythms" fall into a broader conceptualization of objective fetish, what John Hutnyk ubiquitously describes as "Other-love" (Hutnyk 2000, 6). Where do the depths of his fascination for Leviev's sense rhythm stem from, and what aspects of desire do Ellis' fascinations reference? Most importantly, how does the relationship between Leviev and Ellis inform our own ideas about them as individual musicians, as musical collaborators, and as part of the broader connection between jazz historiography and jazz's history in Bulgaria that has been within the scope of this dissertation?

In this chapter I unpack the politics of the moment of performance in jazz amongst Bulgarians by more intensely engaging with the historical discourse on fascination. Understanding the relationship between fascination and the object, I argue, provides a useful way to mediate some of the difficulties of jazz discourse in theorizing intersubjective moments between musicians. These issues of intersubjectivity, jazz performance and aesthetics have been explored in several works since the mid-1990s, most of which center on two perspectives. The first involves the engagement between two subjects divorced of social and political context, mediated only by the dynamics of the performance itself and often elucidated through a hermeneutical perspective (Monson 1996, Belgrad 1999, Gebhardt 2001, Piedade 2003, Hersch 2007). The second focuses more broadly on cross-cultural and/or inter-cultural differences, and how performance functions as a mediation of those differences, a popular meme influenced by

[2] See Rice 1994 and 2002; Buchanan 1991, 1996, 2000, and 2006; and Levy 2004 for examples and critiques of this mystification of various folk and pop styles from Bulgaria in the late-1980s and early-1990s.

ethnomusicological scholarship on the world music industry starting in the early-1990s (Slobin 1993; Erlmann 1993; Keil and Feld 1994; Guibault 1997; Lipsitz 1997; Taylor 1997, 2001; Monson 1999; Feld 1988, 1996, 2000; Meintjes 2003).

While providing valid perspectives on the politics of performance both of these frames miss some of the deeper issues inherent in these intersubjective relationships. One such issue, I argue, is the complex web of desires and imaginings that goes into how musicians construct themselves, how those musicians are constructed by others (i.e. listeners), and how relationships with objects facilitate and drive these perspectives in various ways. I draw upon "fascination" as an analytical frame for these desires because of the epistemological history as the most intense experiential engagement between subject and object. After tracing the problems of imagining the motives and desires of musicians in jazz historiography in general I use the example of vibraphonist Milt Jackson, drummer Kenny Clarke, and ethnomusicologist Ingrid Monson to focus on Maurice Blanchot's conceptualization of the "outside" as a way to show the importance of the space of possibility formed around the subject-object relationship through the intense gaze of fascination. I then draw from Walter Benjamin's association of craftsmanship with the materiality of the hand to posit what I call *crafting*, a concept designed to critique the idea of the "unknowable object" that is inherent in Blanchot's construction of the "outside," where fascination can be defined as the epistemic field surrounding the "unknowable" object. I claim that through *crafting*, which encompasses the field of practices musicians' engage with both inside and outside the moment of performance, the subject is empowered to manipulate the relationship between

him/herself and the "unknowable" object of fascination. I then elicitate the relationship between *crafting* and fascination by tracing a short case study: a 2009 performance by Bulgarian pianist Antoni Donchev and saxophonist Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov. Through this example, I illuminate rhetorical and hermeneutical aspects of fascination and *crafting* cited above and show how an understanding of the relationship between the two offers the possibility of an alternative reading of the moment of performance in jazz. This reading better takes into account the particular historical trajectory of jazz in Bulgaria. The framework also helps to understand the resistance of Bulgarian musicians toward "unknowable" objects of fascination, like those within Bulgarian folk music, embedded within the historical relationship between Bulgaria and Europe. Through this resistance, Bulgarian musicians essentially use the epistemic field of fascination, much as they use boredom as I argued in Chapter 4, to resist being reduced to objects themselves.

THE ALLURE OF INTUITING: MILT JACKSON AND THE MJQ

Intuiting the social dynamics between musicians has been an integral part of jazz discourse since the rise of bebop in the United States after the Second World War. This era, Jason Stanyek argues, was the first time that the "intimate link between the social and cultural experiences of Africans in the Americas and the development of a heterogeneous intercultural space within which dialogic forms of musical interaction…[could] take place" (Stanyek 2004, 117). The melding of the African American experience of modernity and "dialogic form" in improvisation had many different historical contexts. One notable source was the white American "gaze" toward

the "primitive" black body and that abstract body's stereotypically innate rhythmic sense (Radano 2000). Another was the musical engagement in the 20th century between Africans and people of the African diaspora (Gilroy 1993, Stanyek 2004). Though both come from different social and historical origins, they share a similar mode of inquiry – the desire of those outside of the "intercultural space" to ascertain the meanings within. This desire to elucidate meaning was not unique to postwar jazz, as the writings of Hugues Panassié attest, though it did become more pronounced in postwar writings about jazz. What separated pre and postwar interest in jazz performance more generally was in the emphasis on understanding the performance itself, as opposed to only interest in the affect of that performance in social terms (Monson 1995, Ford 2008). In other words, the attempt of audiences, writers, and musicians to understand the primary role of improvisation in bebop and that genre's subsequent incarnations created an epistemic field susceptible to the desire to intuit motives by those outside of the performance.

I find one example from American jazz of that era particularly illuminating with regard to the desire to intuit the space of performance. Ingrid Monson (2007), writing about the politics of African-American modernism in 1950s and 1960s jazz in the United States, cites a 1956 interview from a French magazine with drummer Kenny Clarke about his recent collaboration with the Modern Jazz Quartet. MJQ was a musical experiment in an era dominated by bebop, a laboratory for John Lewis to blend together elements of jazz and Western art music together into what Gunther Schuller famously referred to as "Third Stream." The eclectic combination of Baroque fugal textures, swing backbeat, and bebop chromaticism was simultaneously lauded and panned by critics, audiences,

and other musicians. In Clarke's interview, he detailed why he left the group and his frustrations with John Lewis as an ensemble leader. Clarke openly questioned Lewis's desire to play jazz at all, claimed Lewis preferred to play Bach and Chopin, and felt stifled creatively by the formal restrictiveness of Lewis's compositions. In the midst of his complaints, he became concerned about similar restrictions for the other members of MJQ, particularly Milt Jackson, who was by that time one of the most sought-after vibraphonists in New York. "Jackson," Clarke explains, "is a marvelous jazzman, but he has his hands tied in the MJQ. He suffers a lot from never having the chance to really play. I think that in the end he'll leave, like me" (Monson 2007, 97).[3] But, as Monson notes, Jackson stayed in the group until 1974, when MJQ folded amidst financial concerns. She concludes that "he must have found *something* musically and personally satisfying in the way the group practiced the politics of respectability" [emphasis mine] (ibid. 97).

Monson speculates that Jackson stayed in the ensemble because of the "respectability" amongst mainstream audiences for the MJQ at a time when Black artists often lacked such "respectable" avenues in jazz performance. Clarke, on the other hand, insisted that Jackson's sense of artistry and love of playing "jazz" would draw him away from "having his hands tied," in Clarke's words. Both Monson and Clarke, from their own perspectives, attempted to intuit the nature and dynamics of Jackson's relationship with Lewis and the MJQ. While Clarke inquired from a position of professionalism as

[3] The passage is Monson's own translation from French, appearing in "Le M.J.Q. Fait-Il Jazz?" *Jazz Magazine*, vol. 3, no. 22 (December 1956): 20.

fellow musician, Monson came from a more analytical trajectory. That their respective positions produced different hypotheses, I argue, isn't as important as what drew them to question Jackson's motives in the first place. Clearly there was, using Monson's words, *something* that drew Jackson to play with Lewis for so long, especially considering that MJQ was far from a financial windfall for him and he almost certainly could have made more money playing elsewhere.[4] Lacking Jackson's own words on the subject opens up a space for intuiting Jackson's choices based on experience and empirical knowledge, as with Clarke, or methodological inquiry, as with Monson.

The desire to intuit subject positions from the "outside" has been one of the most prominent factors in the construction of a *transcendent*, and therefore *transparent*, improvising subject in jazz historiography. Such intuiting, however, has a reflexive dimension in drawing the inquirer into a space in which his or her own motives are subject to question. Literary theorist Oliver Harris recognizes this inherent fallibility in the desire to intuit with regard to his research on author William S. Burroughs, asking himself "is fascination the necessary subject of an approach to Burroughs, because it is a deliberate theme and a calculated effect of his work? Or is that reading only a ruse on my part, just an alibi to support an otherwise aberrant relation to it" (Harris 2003, 10)? Harris' questions about the direction of fascination are quite apropos to the space of jazz performance. Is the fascination with the *something* that brings musicians together simply

[4] Monson cites Charles Mitchell's 1974 *Downbeat* article entitled "Modern Jazz Quartet Calls It Quits" for a statement by Jackson about the lack of financial success he had in his time with MJQ (Monson 2007, 349).

an affect of that engagement that draws people in, or is it as Harris suggested an "alibi" that perpetually defers the motives of the inquirer?

In order to answer Harris' questions, I argue that we need a better understanding of what it means to be "outside" of an object of fascination. Though "outside" is a conceptual position that a subject can inhabit as a basis for inquiry, it can simultaneously be a space that inquiry and imagination cannot broach, directly tied to the relationship of subject and object delineated through fascination. This latter view of the "outside" is explored in the work of Maurice Blanchot, to which I will now turn as a way to critique the dynamics of motivic intuition postulated by Clarke, Monson, and Harris.

MAURICE BLANCHOT AND THE "OUTSIDE"

Drawing upon the brief epistemology of fascination from the introductory chapter, the word "fascination" in Western thought historically referred to someone being affected by magic spells, or charmed by the eyes of a snake or a woman. The subject was unable to turn away from the influence of the object and thus succumbed to its power. Even in later scientific incarnations of "fascination," either as magnetism or as medical hypnotism, the conceptualization of "fascination" still maintained many of these historical mystical underpinnings. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer eloquently and justifiably critique the inner mechanisms of Enlightenment rationalism and expose the mystical underpinnings within the irrational mindset supposedly cast out by enlightened Western culture. The fascination of philosophers and

scientists with their own rationality, so Adorno and Horkmeimer argue, begat fascism after only a few generations.

Maurice Blanchot and Jacques Lacan perpetuate a less conventional take on "fascination" in their writings. As opposed to positing that "fascination" is produced through the *presence* of something, Blanchot and Lacan instead argued that "fascination" is inferred through the *absence* of something. Absence, in this context, refers to something that lacks embodiment yet still affects through psychoanalytical devices such as Freud's "uncanny." Lacan, for example, felt that the fascinating absence was linked to the unattainability of the object of desire, and the absence is felt as a repetition of nothingness that draws attention to itself, becoming fascinating by the very nature of there being nothing at all (Lacan 1998). "Fascination" is thus defined not by the object in the field of vision, but the space surrounding the object that promotes the intuiting of that object's presence. The difference, for Lacan, was between the "instant of seeing" and the "*fascinum*" (Bellour 1990, 107).

Another perspective on the relationship between absence and "fascination" was in Blanchot's concept of the "outside," prominently explored in his book *The Infinite Conversation*, first published in 1969 as *L'Entretien infini*. For Blanchot, the "outside" is a space in which the object of fascination lies beyond rational comprehension. He arrived at that concept by arguing that Hegelian notions of absolute knowledge are a "relation to impossibility" (Blanchot 1993, 47), a space of potential for knowledge and experience but ultimately "not a totality of possibilities to be actualized" (Burke 1999, 853). To pursue this space is to ultimately take oneself out of the world, or to make "the

move outside of truth" (ibid. 853). The implication of Blanchot's "outside" is as a refutation of Hegel's stance that objects can be intuited because of the difference between concept and object is constructed through the consciousness. Hegel's conceptualization is untenable because the object is, in Blanchot's words, "ungraspable." "Fascination," then, is a concept that encompasses the futile attempt to engage with the unknowable object. Yet Blanchot's take on fascination is double-edged. To engage too with the object deeply risks the subject becoming subsumed by desire, but the object of fascination also provides, for Blanchot, a kind of companionship in its unknowability provided one maintains conceptual distance from the object in question.

To demonstrate the folly of engaging with the "impossible object of fascination," Blanchot uses the story of Orpheus and his wife Eurydice from Greek mythology as an allegory. Victoria Burke, in an essay tracing the linkages between desire and fascination through Hegel and Blanchot, explains that:

> Greek mythology tells us that Eurydice was killed before the consummation of her marriage to Orpheus when she was stung by a viper as she walked in a meadow with her bridesmaids. Overwhelmed with grief, Orpheus undertook the journey to the Underworld where he won the favor of the gods by playing his lyre. The gods permitted him to return Eurydice to the surface of the earth on the condition that he not gaze upon her during the journey. But Orpheus could not resist looking at her, and the gaze of Orpheus condemns Eurydice to the Underworld for eternity. Orpheus is guilty of what Blanchot calls impatience, the attempt to bring to light that which cannot reveal itself: "The deep does not reveal itself directly, it is only disclosed hidden in the work," writes Blanchot. It is in this sense that we are to understand the object of fascination to be impossible: Orpheus is compelled by a desire the pursuit of which destroys the conditions of its own fulfillment. This desire, which Blanchot calls fascination, imperceptibly animates consciousness. Both intimate companion and threat, it is that which compels thought beyond itself (ibid. 855-56).

Orpheus "destroying the conditions of his own fulfillment," even as allegory, seems like a drastic abstraction to associate with Clarke and Monson intuiting the motives of Milt Jackson. Still, Blanchot's use of the myth gives a strong demonstration of the seductive power that objects hold, a power that must be circumvented for subjective autonomy. The Orpheus allegory carries even more weigh when applied to Bulgaria, given the particular contextualized meanings within Bulgarian history and mythology that the myth of Orpheus carries. Orpheus has, in fact, been a symbolic mainstay in the Bulgarian tourist industry throughout the post-communist period. Tourist brochures in the Rhodope Mountains reference the region as the "birthplace of Orpheus." In the town of Smolyan, a children's music festival, a cultural center, and a local NGO all carry the name of Orpheus (Cellarius 2004, 279). There are even connections to capturing Orpheus as object within the realm of wedding music and ethno-jazz, as evident in the title of Ivo Papasov's first album released in the US in 1991 – *Orpheus Ascending*.

On the surface, Blanchot's take on the "outside" as part of "fascination" on the surface seems to have little applicability outside of the realm of the psychoanalytical. But if the scope of his argument seems problematic, there is still something to be gained more generally from his position on intuition and knowledge toward objects. Blanchot's argument nicely demonstrates how seductive the imagining of motives and actions can be. This seduction is all too present in jazz historiography in the cult of personality surrounding the "transcendental improvising subject." The stronger the desire to construct mythologized and imagined subjectivities by those who listen to jazz musicians – to try and codify genius in particular ways as David Ake showed is the case with John

Coltrane – the further away "true" understanding of motives becomes. In addition, Blanchot's reading of "fascination" suggests that such an understanding is itself a red herring. Since knowing the object of "fascination" is impossible, then imagining that object as a living person whose motives and desires can be intuited becomes problematic.

But what good is "fascination" as an analytical concept if, as Blanchot argues, fascination itself points to nothing at all? Through fascination, I argue, the subject creates a bond that doesn't rely on *knowledge* of the object, but rather the *experience* with that object. In the space created by that experience, agency, history, ideology, and social codes mix together into a morass of possibility for enlarged imaginations of the self. Hans Ulrich Seeber describes the movement toward experience when he notes that "fascination…suggest[s] the presence of overpowering energy and a cult of intensity for which aesthetic *experience* is more important than the hermeneutic detection of meanings" [emphasis in original] (Seeber 2010, 289). In other words, if intuiting or knowing the object becomes impossible because of the epistemic blindness that is the nature of fascination, then rejecting such objective knowledge becomes a way in which the subject avoids the "trap" of fascination and can create his/her own spaces of meaning in performance.

To demonstrate how fascination is engaged with by subjects as a way to sidestep the "unknowable" object, I explore one such trajectory within the realm of *craftsmanship*, one of the most undertheorized aspects of performance in scholarship on jazz. I use the term craftsmanship here to denote the practical accumulation of tools, in the mundane exercises of practice, study and the careful polishing of skill that a subject constructs

through performance. Craft, more than just the creation or act of creating functional things, also has certain affective qualities of its own in the acts of a person creating something. This endows craft is also endowed with a particular aesthetic dimension not normally associated to it by Western epistemologies of art.

Perhaps a better word for what I wish to discuss is *crafting*. The verb form of "craft" carries with it the connotation of building, construction, and (most importantly) the actions, movements, and repetitions inherent in the creation and becoming of objects. There are certainly parallels to *crafting* in existing literature, most notably Hannah Arendt's notion of "making," which is "something a craftsman does by forcing raw material to conform to a model (Arendt 1998, ix). With regard to music, there is Christopher Small's idea of *musicking*, which he defines as "to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practice, by providing material for performance…or by dancing" (Small 1998, 9).

One perspective on craft and craftwork from the long history within Western aesthetic theory that need not be parsed out in its entirety here, but has important aspects for my argument about jazz is within the historical dichotomy since the late-18th century between "art" as autonomous and "craft" as a degree of function. Recent scholarship (Mattick 2003, Risattii 1997, Fariello and Owen 2004) has placed the development and perpetuation of this dichotomy at the feet of Kant's notions of the sublime and the beautiful as outlined in "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment" (1790), which played a crucial role in the development of modern aesthetics in Western philosophy. Howard Risatti, in a recent turn away from Kantian aesthetic dichotomies, suggests the

aestheticization of craftsmanship was common in Europe through prior to the late-18th century. Kant's notion of the "universality of an aesthetic judgment" (Kant 2000, 99) in "Critique of the Aesthetic Power of Judgment" severed conceptualizations of art and craftsmanship, and they began to drift into the dichotomous categories of the aesthetic and the functional. Though the line between the two began to blur again in certain forms of aesthetic expression starting in the 1920s,[5] in writing about many kinds of music, including jazz, the dichotomy remains in certain aspects to this day.

In addition, one must consider the metaphorical implications of craft within the Bulgarian history of the politics of craftsmanship through the Ottoman guilds. Onur Yildirim, for example, argues that artisans in Bulgarian cities resisted administration from Ottoman guilds more than any other locale in the empire. Single-artisan workshops amongst a highly skilled immigrant population in Sofia and Plovdiv remained the dominant form of craft production throughout the 18th century (Yildirim 2008, 93). While not directly linked to the perpetuation of jazz in Bulgaria, the guild history in the region provides a tangible link between Bulgaria's history and Benjamin's "arabesque of labor." The fact that lone artisans and their crafting hands are such an integral part of Bulgaria's past creates epistemic connections between their craft, and the craft of Bulgarian musicians who are part of that past.

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[5] The post-1918 artwork of Frenchman Marcel Duchamp comes to mind here, as does the first forays into *musique concrete* by fellow Frenchman Pierre Schaffer about forty years later. Both developed methods in their own fields of recovering the object in the age of mechanical reproduction to produce an aesthetic philosophy that was wholly modern in those terms. They also shared a process through which the creation of the object was just as aestheticized as the work itself, repairing the tenuous Kantian dialectic between autonomous art and functional craft. For more on Duchamp's life and work, see Kuenzli and Naumann 1989 and Naumann 1999. For more on Pierre Schaffer's life and work, see Holmes 2002.

Crafting is also a useful as a bridge between modern and traditional musical practices in Bulgaria, where hands play a significant role as a locus of musical knowledge. Timothy Rice speaks of his training as a bagpipe (*gaida*) player, and how his teacher attributed his technical problems to "lack[ing] of gaida player's fingers" (Rice 1994, 113). Rice continues to explain how this criticism opened his mind to the relationship between the hands and the craft of musicmaking in the Bulgarian folk tradition.

> Once I learned how to move my hands in order to play, they seemed disembodied; as I played, I watched them move, heard the rich array of sounds, and wondered who was controlling them. The sense of my hands as possessing knowledge independent of my mind was quite vivid (ibid. 113).

Rice's story about his hands "possessing knowledge" gives a local example of how *crafting* is usefulness as a mediating concept in multifaceted notions of performance practice. The usefulness lies partially in craft's epistemic roots in premodern conceptualizations of experiencing the object, conceptualizations that Risatti argues were the grounding for the aestheticization of craft (Risatti 1997). Such experiences were sensual and material, and thus provide a rejoinder to "fascination" creating the unknowable, untouchable object of Blanchot's writings. In essence, *crafting* creates a space in which intimacy prevails, and subsequently revitalizes the inquiry of motive that Blanchot's take on "fascination" renders impossible. To elaborate further, I now turn to Walter Benjamin's writings on craft and the hands in order to elucidate the relationships he saw between craft, experience, and objectification.

CRAFTING THE SELF: WALTER BENJAMIN, OBJECTS, AND HANDS

Esther Leslie traces of Benjamin's conceptualization of craft in several of his works, most notably "The Storyteller" and the "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Leslie notes the common threads in both of these works that tactility and "hands" have in the project of fracturing. She argues that:

> the hand, with its tactility, is central in Benjamin's comprehension of experience, or more specifically in Benjamin's vision of redemption or recovery of experience under threat, is intimated in his aphorism, 'Salvation includes the firm, apparently brutal grip'. Grasping the truth, seizing the future; the hand is a political organ. But it does not work in isolation. Intrinsic to the craftsman, and the gesticulating storyteller, too, is the accord of soul, eye and hand. Thinking, seeing, handling in tandem, this mesh grants a praxis. Storyteller-fashioning his material, human life- and craftsman-fashioning his-mould their raw matter, Benjamin tells us, in a solid, useful, and unique way (Leslie 1998, 6).

Thinking, seeing, handling, and perhaps by extension listening, all become part of the "arabesque of labour, experience, and selfhood" (ibid. 6). Benjamin saw these aspects as essential components of a post-bourgeois mass art. Their power lay in the possibility of manipulating the objects of mass production that had fractured the aura of the work of art. "Crafting" through the work of the hand, in a far different and more visceral way than boredom, could mediate the shifting realms of modern life and ground experience historically through objects themselves. This was yet another way to reconstitute the sense of experience lost through modern life, but in a way very different from that of the Parisian *flâneur*. The short-lived liberation inherent in giving yourself up to the rhythms and magic of commodity fetishism is replaced here by the active work of the hand in reshaping objects from their mass-identity, whilst creating personal narratives through the

process of manipulation. In other words, *crafting* is a recovery of experience through force of hand, rather than recovery through passivity of the object-gaze.

Centering experience through objects themselves, Leslie postulates, was ultimately what Benjamin saw craft leading toward. More specifically, the act of craftsmanship constituted an "understanding of objects…includes essentially an understanding of experiences to be had with objects, and memories evoked by objects or encoded in objects-memories of objects in all possible senses" (ibid. 11). Craft, in this context, is a form of enchantment, ultimately taking "craft" back to the word's etymological roots – the Saxon word *kraft*, referring to something with "power, force or strength" (ibid. 11). The affective meaning for "craft" in the original linguistic form carries over into its various permutations into words like "witchcraft," which historically alludes to enchantment and uncanniness, and the affects they have on the human mind and body.

In short, Benjamin's epistemological connection between craft and fascination creates a way to think about experience with objects within the abstraction of mechanical reproduction. So how does the complex of *crafting*, fascination, the object, and mystification play into practices of jazz, both amongst Bulgarians and others? Again, I think that we have to come back to a discussion of both hands and, by extension, fingers (and voice). "Hands" in the Benjaminian sense not only create new experiences with the object of fascination, but also make transparent the magical undertones present in the language about such engagements.

Describing *crafting* is, I argue, far from an exercise in overt rationality In the next section I explore how *crafting* is folded by musicians and writers into the discourse about jazz specifically through the way musicians articulate the praxis of other musicians they have played with, have heard, have transcribed, or simply admire.

CRAFTING, FASCINATION, AND THE JAZZ CANON

Crafting's connection to jazz historically has been mediated through ideas about practice, the building of one's musical self through painstaking and lifelong labor both on and away from the bandstand. Repetition of movement, the accumulation of tools in the mundane exercises of practice and study, and the careful polishing of skill that feeds into the veneer of virtuosity.[6] Remarkably few studies in jazz scholarship pay heed to the dynamics of *crafting* in and of itself. Paul Berliner's *Thinking In Jazz* (2004) is a remarkably detailed study of practices with the book's detailed sections that ethnographically chart how jazz musicians learn from performance experiences, critical listening, and formal musical education. *Thinking In Jazz*, more than any other work in jazz scholarship, details the inexorable link between virtuosity and crafting, and how the latter can demystify the former in certain aspects. But Berliner's work stops short of looking at crafting outside of anything but purely functional dimensions.

[6] Mariann Kielian-Gilbert's article on Chopin's hands in *Age of Chopin* provides an avenue through which to explore this notion of hands crafting the object in the Western classical tradition through the methodologies in music theory. Most importantly, it's through the notion of the hand that "*material contexts* [emphasis in original] of music embody and shape its different values and weightings, its structures and orientations. These contexts also interact with, effect, and change our perceptions of music" (Kielian-Gilbert 2004, 164).

Gabriel Solis (2008) wrote a remarkable section in his book about Thelonious Monk dedicated solely to the legacy of Monk's music among musicians, and specifically how they tie memory and praxis together into wholly subjective ways of judging what exactly made him so distinct. In doing so, he sets up a dichotomy between musician and non-musician listeners that mirrors the dialectic of enlightenment between reason and magic. Whereas jazz musicians, he argues, ground their understanding of jazz through their own performance experiences, non-performers ground their aesthetic more readily in the "mystery" (Solis 2008, 29).

The parameters between musician rationality and non-musician magic-speak that Solis sketches are common in jazz scholarship and criticism. The experience of learning and playing music, in some ways, dictates that musicians "know" things that non-musicians don't. Or rather, they can supposedly *articulate* what they hear in ways that non-musicians cannot – types of rhythm, origins of licks and lines, and so on – without being reduced to a language of abstractions. The conflation of understanding musical practice with rationality is often why, I argue, virtuosity is constructed by the non-musician as all-encompassing, a way of delineating what he or she hears to an abstract totality of the unknowable, autonomous genius. These abstractions have been a basis for a rational/irrational split in listening practices concerning jazz since the early-20th century, intensifying exponentially with the postwar modernism of the 1950s.

Throughout Solis's book on Thelonius Monk are examples showing that the analytical language of musicians about Monk's ways is far from rational, and rife with mystification. These imaginings of Monk constitute a mystification of the hands, of

weaving, and of the body. The magical language appears in several passages about Monk's sense of time and rhythm spawning from several different musicians, but is perhaps most clearly articulated in a statement by drummer T.S. Monk, Thelonius's son who played with him until 1975. T.S states that:

> Nobody, *nobody* kept time better than Thelonious. And it was *magical* [emphasis mine]. And it forced you, from a rhythmic standpoint, to swing the hardest you will have ever swung in your life. You can ask Roy Haynes, you can ask Max Roach, you can ask me, you can ask any of the drummers, from Leon Chancler, who played with Thelonius, to any of the cats who played a night here, a night there with him, and they'll tell all tell you, "Man, Thelonius was like a magic carpet, man" (ibid. 35).

T.S. Monk's effusion with his father's sense of rhythm is working simultaneously in two different registers. The first points to a rational language of practice amongst musicians, indicative in T.S.'s insistence that you had to "swing the hardest you will have ever swung in your life." At play here is the genius of Thelonius' rhythmic sensibility, reducible to technical traits and intuitable to any drummer who played with him. The second works on a far more abstract level, using words and phrases like "magical" and "like a magic carpet" to hint at the root of such rhythmic understanding on the part of Thelonious. T.S.'s register about Thelonius encompasses the realm of the magical, in which the ability of the genius improviser comes from the ability to tap into some kind of mystical ability that transcends *a priori* knowledge and rational declination. The historical dimension of such intuition is in part embedded within discourses on race and blackness in the West. But T.S.'s intuiting also shows that musicians, despite their years of training and capability for rationalizing musical practice, are still seduced by the potential of an abstract language that broaches mystical. Musicians talking about other

musicians, then, becomes a language of "fascination" in which the allure toward the object becomes desirable as a means of expression.

Part of that language of fascination has to do with what Solis refers to as "potential…found or created by the work of literally thousands of musicians playing [another musician's] work over time" (Solis 2004, 100). Solis' reference to "potential" encompasses a multifaceted intimacy that weaves through time and space and brings musicians together through an amalgamation of performance and text. Various levels of the imagination are present in such intimacy, either through musicians imagining Monk as they play his compositions (qua Solis), or listeners creating connections amongst musicians for their own imaginings.

I want to posit a case study through which these various takes on fascination can elucidate aspects of performance practices amongst Bulgarians playing jazz. Throughout the dissertation I have argued that construction of subjectivity in jazz historiography is problematic with regard to Bulgarian musicians because of the philosophical connections of that subject to the African American experience of modernity. And yet, while critiquing such broader metaphysical connections to an idealized homogeneous "jazz," I have shown different means by which subjects have utilized various affects of the everyday in ways that mediate their fractured selves within modernity. In Chapter 4, for example, I argued that Bulgarian musicians engage with boredom as a way to traverse the labor realities of the post-communist city. In these cases explored below, fascination becomes a frame through which pedagogy can be grounded historically and spatially in order to traverse the same kinds of everyday affects. In other words, engaging with

fascination allows agents to dictate their own relationships toward objects within performance, thus avoiding potential crises of representation that obscure the meaning of objects for musicians and audiences. Consequently, those agents can actively reframe their relationships toward objects for audience members, writers, and others – thus more concretely binding musicians within the historical fields that they navigate through music.

As an example for the potential that a framing of fascination holds for the particular objects inherent in performances between Bulgarian musicians, I utilize a case study consisting of one performance. The performance is of a piece called "Mish-Mash," composed by pianist Antoni Donchev and performed by Donchev and saxophonist Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov, two of the most noted contemporary jazz musicians from Bulgaria. The "object" that their experiences frame is *narodna muzika* – the folk tradition of Bulgaria that has long been objectified by musicians and non-musicians from Bulgaria and elsewhere. From their performance together I intend to parse out the differences in the adoption of Bulgarian folk music in improvisation and composition. In doing so, I show how *crafting* their individual and collaborative engagements with the object articulates their own agencies, while avoiding being reduced to objects themselves.

"MISH-MASH": THE DONCHEV-KŬRPŬROV DUO

The duet of pianist Antoni Donchev and saxophonist Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov provides a perspective through which to examine the mediating function of *crafting*'s mystification on both elements coded "jazz" and "Bulgarian" in a musical performance.

Although I analyze one particular performance between Donchev and Kŭrpŭrov, it is worth noting that their relationship stretches back to the late-1990s, when they performed together regularly as a duo until Kŭrpŭrov left for Germany in 1999. Since reuniting in 2008, the duo has played in many spots like the Bulgarian Embassy in Bonn, the Bulgarian Cultural Institute in Berlin, the Jazz am Rhein Festival, and the Art Jazz Club in Bucharest. They have also played several concerts in Sofia, including in the main hall of Bulgarian National Radio on Dragan Tsankov street. Before my discussion of their performance of "Mish-Mash" in Germany, it is worth exploring each musician's career in order to better understand the kinds of selves that are in play in the performance itself.

Antoni Donchev

Antoni Donchev is one of Bulgaria's most famous jazz musicians and one of the first pianists to find success internationally after Milcho Leviev's emigration in 1972. His early career was a crucial bridge between the Leviev/Nikolov generation that came of age in the late-1960s and the early-1990s, when jazz musicians attempted to navigate the changing orders of post-communist knowledge and experience. He was one of the first of the 1980s generation center his career in Bulgaria, as opposed to more profitable European or North American locales, and has been a critical voice in promoting better reception for jazz and jazz musicians in Bulgarian cities since 1989.

Born in Bourgas in 1959, Donchev began playing piano from the age of six. After graduating from high school, he attended the National Academy of Music in Sofia from 1980-84. Young Donchev quickly established himself as one of the best pianists in

Bulgaria, forming the group *Acoustic Version* in 1985. The duo consisted of Donchev on piano and drummer Hristo Iotsov, who attended the State Academy of Music at the same time as Donchev. Occasionally, the group added bassist Petŭr Slavov Jr., whose father had been active in jazz and pop music since the late-1950s as a member of "Jazz of the Youth" and state-sponsored rock group FSB. *Acoustic Version's* first international performance, at the Jazz Contest in Hoeileaart, Belgium in 1985 netted them the Grand Prix, shades of Jazz Focus '65's Grand Prix at Montreaux almost twenty years earlier. Donchev also netted the prize for best soloist from the Belgian festival, much as Leviev won best soloist at Montreaux.

Hoeileaart was just the beginning of the group's successes. The next year, *Acoustic Version* was awarded Grand Prix at the International Jazz Federation by a panel of judges including the famed German author and jazz critic Joachim Ernst-Berendt, and Donchev garnered the title "Europe's Young Jazz Artist of 1986" from the panel. His newfound international fame catapulted Donchev into a period of great visibility and productivity not seen by a Bulgarian jazz musician since the 1960s. *Acoustic Version* continued to make their presence known throughout European jazz circles over the next few years, playing other festivals like Ost - West in Nuremberg, Jazz Yatra in Bombay and Delhi, Jazz Jamboree in Warsaw, and the Prague Jazz Festival. The group also played in Moscow, Tblisi, Istanbul, Zagreb, and Thessaloniki at various points in the late-1980s and early-1990s.

Also active in other projects, Donchev recorded several albums for Balkanton during the height of his international career in the late-1980s, including *Acoustic Version*

in 1986 and *Folk-Jazz* (*Folk-Dzhaz*) in 1988. He also played on a variety of other projects and recordings with musicians such as Kenny Wheeler, Yildiz Ibrihamova, Reiner Winterschladen, and Lars Danielsson. In recent years, Donchev has branched out from also established himself as a composer for film and theater in Bulgaria, receiving awards for Theater Music (1990) and the Film Music award of the Bulgarian Film Association (1997, 2008). In 2000 he recorded "Home no. 13" (*Dom no. 13*) on the Kuker label, which was the first internationally released album of his theater and film music. The album was produced after the successful staging of *Dom no. 13* in 1997 at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg, a collaboration with choreographer and director Tedi Moskov. The two have worked on other stagings in Germany and Bulgaria over the years, including *Phantasmagorias* (*Fantasmagorii*) (1987), *Swan Songs* (1996), and *Blue in Blue* (1997), all of which garnered critical praise from the German press. For all of Donchev's accomplishments in jazz and theater/film music, he has also twice been awarded by the Union for Bulgarian Musicians, receiving the Silver Lyre in 1988, and the more prestigious Crystal Lyre in 2001.

Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov

Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov was born in Sofia in 1977. After taking up saxophone as a child, he attended the Pancho Vladigerov State Academy of Music from 1995 to 1999 with a concentration in jazz and popular music. Recognizing Kŭrpŭrov's prodigious talent, pianist Vasil Parmakov took on the young saxophonist a member of his group *Zone C*, one of the premier Sofian jazz projects of the 1990s. Kŭrpŭrov participated in

his professional first recording, *Zone C*'s 1996 release *The Human Factor*, at the age of 19. After graduating from the State Academy, Kŭrpŭrov like many musicians of his generation sought further educational opportunities in Western Europe. He moved on to Germany and continued his studies at the University for Music and Theater (*Hochschule für Musik und Theater*) in Hamburg, later finishing at Berlin's Hans Eisler College for Music (*Hans Eisler Hochschule für Musik*) in 2005 with degrees in saxophone and education. Remaining in Berlin, he has toured throughout Europe, Asia, and Latin America playing with artists such as Milcho Leviev, Okay Temiz, John Hollenback, and Gehard Ullman. Kŭrpŭrov also recorded several albums with groups he played with during his days in Germany, like the Interzone Jazz Orchestra (1999's *Interzone* and 2002's *Transylvanian Grace*) and For Free Hands (1999's *Eastern Moods* and 2007's *Transversal*). He also played on Romanian singer Oana Cătălina Chiţu's 2008 album *Bucharest Tango*, a novel attempt at recording popular music from Bucharest's cabarets and hotels that had been lost since the 1930s.

Kŭrpŭrov's own projects include the Vladimir Kŭrpŭrov Quartet, which released the album *Thracian Dance* in 2008. The album displays his affinity for a wide variety of styles and genres that he has encountered throughout his career – Bulgarian folk music, tango, Turkish *arabesque*, and Romany *kyuchek* – constantly pushing the harmonic and rhythmic thresholds of these styles. The Folklor Saxophone Quartet, which he formed with Germans Florian Trübsbach, André Cimiotti, and Katharina Thomsen in 2009, was the culmination of his dream to create a saxophone quartet that combined jazz and elements of Bulgarian folk music. He also still plays frequently with For Free Hands and

several other groups in Germany, though since 2010 he has focused almost exclusively on the VK Quartet and the Folklor Quartet.

Though still based in Berlin, he returns to Bulgaria several times a year to play concerts with local musicians. I first saw him perform live in a concert with *Zone C* (without Parmakov, who was playing a concert date in Sozopol) at Soul in da Hole in July 2010. The set was marvelous. I found myself amazed at the fluidity of his improvisations, particularly with how deftly he moved back and forth between technical tropes referencing a wide range of musical styles. His fingers themselves seemed to have within them a deep catalogue of experiences, studies, and histories. I spoke to him briefly after the performance and was struck by the minute detail that he paid to every aspect of his playing – his intense practice regimen, his study of Bulgarian folk music as a gateway to more meaningful improvisations, and his ideas about the inclusive potential of the medium of jazz improvisation. Many of Kŭrpŭrov's ideas and practices were similar to Milcho Leviev's ideas about jazz's potential for the "modern" expression of elements of Bulgarian music that Leviev expressed almost forty years earlier.

The Kŭrpŭrov-Donchev duo is one of many ongoing projects that each musicians is involved with. I emphasize this particular performance as an instance in the musical encounter where *crafting* selves mediate one another through social, historical, and generational differences. Their collaboration gives us an example of how *crafting*, as Benjamin's mediator of the objectification that fascination mystifies, can be a useful way to hedge such a fascination away from the realm of fetish and elucidate social and personal histories played out in the moment of performance. In examining one

performance I am not intending to construct an idealized amalgamation of every instance in which the duo has and will perform this piece. Rather, I argue that the Germany performance of "Mish-Mash" is a moment through which listeners become part Donchev and Kŭrpŭrov *crafting*. The autonomous, "transcendental improvising subject" of jazz historiography gives way to a historically and social bounded subject whose crafted agency defines a sense of place within orders of knowledge and practice.[7]

"Mish-Mash" Analysis

Although the duo has played Donchev's "Mish-Mash" on several occasions, I am using their performance of the piece at the Bulgarian Embassy in Bonn, Germany on May 3rd, 2009. The song's title comes from the name of a Bulgarian dish that combines tomatoes, bell peppers, onions, and other vegetables fried into a semi-hashed omelet. The dish's name comes from its composition – an amalgamation of whatever vegetables are available, and thus the recipe is often flexible in terms of content and amount of ingredients. "Mish-mash" has in fact often been used a metaphor for the stylistic mixings amongst Bulgarian musicians, and I have encountered the term used both in conversation and in more formal interviews. Kŭrpŭrov has referred to his style of composition and improvisation in interviews as "mish-mash jazz" on several occasions (Attmansdorfer

[7] In employing this particular argument with the Kŭrpŭrov/Donchev duo, I am highlighting a perspective through which another side of fascination manifests, this time in the moment of performance. There are also examples of the sort of subjective imagining here that I highlighted in the Leviev/Ellis example as well. For example, Kŭrpŭrov has said the following about the members of *Acoustic Version* in a 2011 interview: "*Acoustic Version* has always been for me, 'jazz'in Bulgaria, without prejudice to anyone else. These are people who have done so much so are pulled into this music and have always been a great institution" (Attmansdorf 2011b). Although I found no such interview from Donchev's end in speaking about Kŭrpŭrov, mutual acquaintances in Sofia have intimated that Donchev finds Kŭrpŭrov to be one of the best younger jazz players to come out of Bulgaria in many years.

2011a), and Donchev uses the title as a sign of the complex of influences on his music that have accumulated through his education and career.

The Bonn performance begins with a flurry of sound from both Donchev's piano and Kŭrpŭrov's soprano saxophone which after a few seconds coalesces into a tonal center of E. Kŭrpŭrov lands on the tonal pitch at the 0:14-second mark of the performance.[8] He highlights the note through use of ornamentation idiomatic of free-meter *gaida* or *kaval* improvisations called *sitnezhi* that introduced dances (Buchanan 2004, 95).[9] While Donchev provides a relatively unobtrusive sonic backdrop, Kŭrpŭrov freely oscillates between *sitnezhi* and figures reminiscent of Coltrane's "sheets of sound" – rapid aharmonic and amelodic figures moving up and down the entire range of the instrument. The texture reaches a climax at 0:30 before both instrumentalists begin to soften considerably, Kŭrpŭrov again centering back on the E as Donchev fades the piano's sound into near silence.

At around 0:45 Donchev quietly introduces the ostinato that provides the backbone of the piece. He moves the tonal center to G, cemented by a series of left-hand open-fifths in the lower register (fig. 6.1) that establishes the piece's predominant 7/4 meter by means of a stepwise B-E/F-C/D-G pickup. Donchev's right hand includes a

[8] The time declinations I use throughout this section refer to a video posted on Kŭrpŭrov's YouTube channel. The URL for the performance is http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pv9BdiE9sC0, and it would be useful but not required to watch the piece as I elaborate upon it in order to get a better idea of some of the language and terminology choices.

[9] Variations on *sitnezhi* were very common in performances by Ivo Papsov and other wedding musicians (*svatbarski muzikanti*) starting in the 1980s, music that was influenced by jazz improvisation to some degree.

more deliberate rhythmic articulation of the 7/4, implying the chord Gsus7 through a clustered C-D-E-F-G tetrachord.

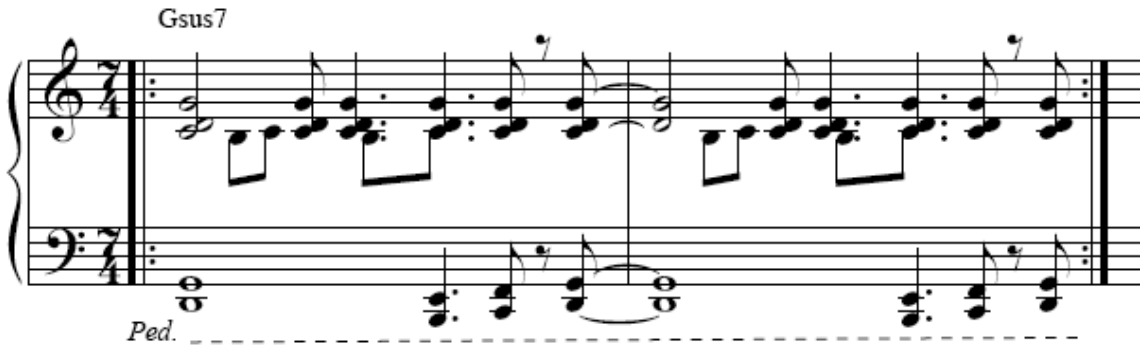

Fig. 6.1: Piano ostinato, "Mish-Mash," Donchev-Kŭrpŭrov Duo

Once Donchev has firmly established the ostinato groove, Kŭrpŭrov enters with the melody at 0:57. The melody is a fairly simple, descending diatonically in G with the added third (B), highlighted through heavy ornamentation on consecutively repeated notes. It contrasts the open 11th voicings that Donchev employs in the background. The end of the first phrase has the saxophone moving into texture with long notes that outline an ascending whole-tone scale (fig. 6.2) while Donchev shifts the pedal point of the ostinato briefly to C before the melody repeats itself.

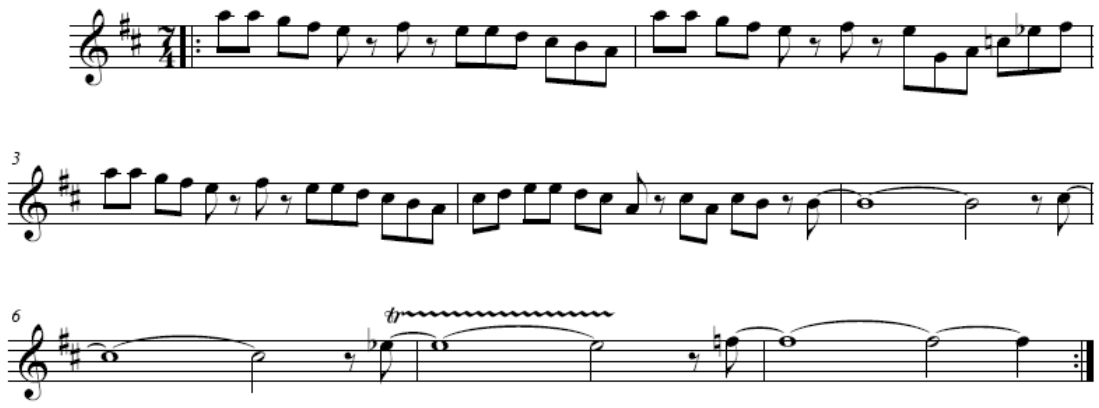

Fig. 6.2: Soprano saxophone melody, "Mish-Mash"

The bridge (B section) creates a contrasting texture. Kŭrpŭrov plays a chromatic eighth-note line on a rhythmic variant of the melody, while the Donchev breaks the rhythmic *ostinato* to chordally reestablish the E minor from the introduction. The section ends with the two musicians playing a parallel eighth-note figure separated by an interval of a sixth, followed return of the E minor piano ostinato. Donchev then moves back to G and Kŭrpŭrov repeats of the melody. The entire form (A-A-B) is followed through in its entirety with slight improvised variations at the end of phrases. At the end of the form's recapitulation, the song moves into a harmonically static section that shifts back into E minor for solos by each of the musicians.

Kŭrpŭrov's soprano saxophone solo begins in the E minor established in the bridge, moving between G and E minor at various points. He employs techniques here that are in stark contrast to "sheets of sound" introduction or the fluid eighth-note lines of the melody. Instead, he utilizes a heavy staccato over a repeated series of triads

displaced by an octave.[10] As the solo continues, he moves more and more outside of the established harmonic center, oscillating between long chromatic lines and modulating pentatonic figures, a common improvisational tool of conservatory-trained jazz musicians around the world. At the height of his solo (3:16) he introduces another texture that emphasizes the limited range and heavy finger ornamentation of Bulgarian folk music, coinciding with Donchev changing the accompaniment to a percussive ostinato in E minor with truncated range in his voicings. The remaining minute of Kŭrpŭrov's solo oscillates frequently between these two textures – heavy Bulgarian-style ornamentation in the E minor sections, and fluid chromatic and pentatonic lines over the G sections.

Donchev's solo, beginning at 4:35, starts by using short, rhythmically homogeneous figures in the right hand, emulating Kŭrpŭrov's first improvised phrase. However, Donchev continues to emphasize the very open textures he has been playing throughout the work thus far by voicing the figures in open 4ths, as opposed to Kŭrpŭrov's more diatonic lines. He then transitions to playing a string of constant 8th notes in his right hand, supported by open octaves ascending stepwise at the beginning of each measure. Donchev then transitions into a new ostinato in his left hand at 5:14, utilizing a measure-long 8th note figure outlining the 2+2+2+2+3+3 metric grouping. The ostinato provides the rhythmic and harmonic support for the rest of his solo, which Kŭrpŭrov supports by switching to tenor saxophone and emulating the beats of a *tupan*

[10] This staccato is used to similar effect by Kŭrpŭrov on Chiţu's Romanian tango album, implying the possibility that he is drawing on some of the techniques from that style into his own improvisation vocabulary.

by using tongue slaps on his reed. Donchev uses the change in texture to lead into a recapitulation of the theme at 6:27, first in piano and then in soprano saxophone. The piece ends with the last measure of the B section repeated three times like a coda, with both musicians ending with a flourish on the same E that started the piece.

JAZZ, BULGARIAN FOLK MUSIC, AND THE OBJECT OF FASCINATION

Both Donchev and Kŭrpŭrov have stated their vested interest in the music from the Balkans as a wellspring of creativity. These interests obviously facilitated their collaborative relationship and, much like Leviev and Ellis, create moments in performance that fascination makes thick with various meanings. Using the performance of "Mish-Mash" as a backdrop, I point to different ways in which Kŭrpŭrov and Donchev's varying engagements with Bulgarian folk music, and their incorporation of that historically "fascinating" object into their *crafting* subjectivities, place them in multifaceted and conflicting historical fields that add further layers of consonances and dissonances to their performance.

The conflicting historical field elucidated most clearly in the Bonn performance is in terms of generational difference. Beneath the sound and structure of "Mish-Mash" lies an interesting series of dichotomies between Donchev and Kŭrpŭrov that more generally allude to the relationship between pre-transition and post-transition jazz musicians in Bulgaria. One expression of these dichotomies is in the creation and implementation of playing techniques. Kŭrpŭrov's playing style draws significant influence from saxophone techniques inherent in the traditions of folk music (*narodna*

muzika) and wedding music (*svatbarska muzika*) – ornamentation, timbre, and melodic and harmonic construction. He is quite adamant about using these techniques not just as abstract sonic markers, but as a genuine part of his *crafting* self – doing the labor and practice necessary to employ such techniques with respect to their embedded ontological histories. *Crafting*, then, mediates some of the epistemological gaps between his conceptualizations of jazz and Bulgarian folk music and allows him to utilize both more readily, with respect to their various histories. Kŭrpŭrov emphasizes the connection between *crafting* and incorporating various musical elements in interviews that he has given, most notably in a piece about him originally published in a 2007 issue of the Bulgarian newspaper "Now" (*Sega*).

> My interesting in folklore was not random, but I am still learning about this music. I transcribe solos to learn to *play it* properly [emphasis mine]. I would define the music that I play as mish-mash jazz. The most dangerous thing in a music is to not get kitsch. Everything depends on the mix of things. Currently there is no man who has managed to play both styles perfectly: folk and jazz. The most suitable fusion is the mixing, the important thing is to act emotionally (Attsmanstorfer 2011a).

I have found that Kŭrpŭrov's attitude about the creation of "mish-mash jazz" is prevalent amongst many jazz musicians of his generation, particularly those who have studied and/or built their careers abroad. Among them are a number of musicians (pianist Anton Bodurov, saxophonist Dimitŭr Liolev) whom I have mentioned in previous chapters. Also included are jazz *kavalists* (*kavaladzhii*) like Nedyalko Nedyalkov and Sylvester Mateev who have followed the lead of Teodosii Spassov in redefining *kaval* technique to

include a jazz-influenced chromaticism.[11] Like Kŭrpŭrov, these musicians have utilized their musical education and performance experiences to broaden their palate of musical influences. Incorporation of Bulgarian folk music in this case isn't about the appropriation of abstracted objects or signs, but a literal *crafting* of the self that exudes a certain historical and experiential awareness. In a Deleuzian sense, there is a strong parallel to the concept of *becoming-kaval* or *becoming-gaida*, a mode of self-transformation in the act of accumulating and reproducing these techniques keep them within the histories of their creation and dissemination.[12] Kŭrpŭrov's integration of those techniques embeds his playing within a multiplicity of histories and practices that encompass the routes he has travelled throughout his career, from Bulgaria to Germany. Thus his *crafting* maintains a material dimension referential to lived experiences, another instance of Benjamin's "arabesque of labor."

Donchev, almost twenty years older and one who came of age in a comparatively anti-cosmopolitan Bulgaria of the 1980s, treats the use of Bulgarian material much differently in his own work. There is very little of the *becoming-kaval* that we see in Kŭrpŭrov's generation. Instead, the musical traits referencing Bulgarian folk music are

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[11] Nedyalkov and Mateev lead the bands Ikadem and Silver Beat Collective respectively, the two groups currently standing at the vanguard of *ethnojazz* in Bulgaria coming into the new decade. At a later date I plan on writing about the remapping of *kaval* technique through jazz pedagogy via the *crafting* of Spassov, Nedyalkov, and Mateev.

[12] Deleuze and Guattari's notion of *becoming* is one of the most oft-cited cornerstones of their collective thought. As with most of their terminology, *becoming* is itself multiplicitous and conceptually is always in flux, leading to other things. The section in *A Thousand Plateaus* that links *becoming* together with music by stating that *becoming* is a block of expression identifiable through its conceptual movement and rhythm. As with subject positions, *becoming* is an always moving. Their examples range from vocal *castrati* as *becoming-woman* or *becoming-child*, and Oliver Messian's piece emulating birdsong as *becoming-animal*. The important thing to remember is that in Deleuzian thought, it is not about actually becoming the object as identity, but deterritorializing that object and describing the process through which a multiplicitous space of being exist between subject and object (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 299-309).

far more abstract and diffuse. Part of the reason, I argue, is because of the relationship of Bulgarian folk music to the communist government more generally. As Donna Buchanan and Tim Rice have shown, part of the institutionalization of styles by the state-sponsored folk ensembles was the homogenization of the village into a high aesthetic abstraction that was part of a broader modern socialist political economy. In Chapter 3, I showed the same kind of process happening in some of the early works composed for the EOBRT by Milcho Leviev. "Studiya" and "Blues in 9" incorporated rhythms from Bulgarian folk music, but were still integrated within the larger socialist practice of utilizing an "essence" of folk as building block of the Bulgarian socialist modern.

The use of metric grouping in "Mish-Mash" is one example, I argue, of how the historical abstraction of Bulgarian musical traits appears in the music of Donchev's generation. The rhythmic grouping of 2+2+2+2+3+3 (4+4+3+3) in the theme remains relatively constant throughout the piece, although there is movement into homogeneous duple groupings during the bridge and at some points in the solos. The metric delineation does not adhere to any of the popular folk dances (*narodni tantsi*) like *rŭchenitsa* (7/16), *gankino horo*, *kopanitsa* (both in 11/16), or *daichovo horo* (9/16). Instead, it gives the veneer of the polymeteric folk dance while still employing an even number of beats (14 8^{th} notes) to allow the more fluid improvisational lines idiomatic to Donchev's playing. This technique of what I call "rhythmic valence" is apparently common throughout many of Donchev's compositions. Another example is the ironically titled "We Are the Barbarians," which groups the rhythm into 16 8^{th} notes (2+2+2+3+2+2+3), which again does not adhere to the metric pattern of any particular folk dance. As with "Mish-Mash,"

this technique gives "We Are the Barbarians" a polyrhythmic veneer while still broadening the possible stylistic source material for improvisations. The several versions I have seen of the Donchev-Kŭrpŭrov duo performing this piece demonstrate a similar improvisational approach from both musicians to their respective playing on "Mish-Mash."

Donchev's improvisational style, though markedly different from Kŭrpŭrov's, still emphasizes a multifaceted, yet slightly different array of influences from throughout his career. Some of these include open voicings grouped in 4^{ths} or 5^{ths}, lower register tonal clusters in the left hand, long right-handed phrases using heavy chromaticism, cross-hand polyrhythmic motifs, and baroque-style contrapuntal technique. Like Milcho Leviev, Donchev employs liberal use of pedal to blend pitches together, and favors a light touch on the keys that carefully evoke the crystalline textures of open intervals. But for all of these varied techniques from different music, his solos rarely dialogue directly with practices from Bulgarian folk music like Kŭrpŭrov's. Donchev never uses the heavy ornamentation common in accordion players or keyboard players in Bulgarian wedding bands. Nor does he often alter the timbre or percussiveness of his playing to emulate local instruments. Donchev`s *crafting*, in short, never becomes a Deleuzian *becoming* – the relationship is more akin to the professional abstraction of Bulgarian folk music as "modern" during the late socialist years in which he grew up.

The differences in Kŭrpŭrov`s and Donchev`s relationship to Bulgarian folk music in their playing based on the aforementioned generational gap are reflected somewhat in the state of musical labor in present-day Bulgaria. The gap becomes most

pronounced in the competition for concert and festival dates at the "jazz" festivals mentioned in Chapter 5. Some musicians from Donchev's generation have publicly voiced their displeasure that the slate of musicians more closely emulating Bulgarian folk and wedding music are getting most of the work at lucrative festivals like July Jazz Smolyan. I recall reading a lengthy essay posted online by another musician claiming that while the music of the younger generation was interesting and skillful, but not "jazz" in his mind or experience. The poster made a point to mostly blame the festival organizers for the general state of affairs, rather than the musicians who had little control over the kinds of music and musicians sought by the festivals. Still, ultimate direction of these frustrations were aimed at the wide multiplicity of influences amongst younger musicians, and their willingness to employ them in order to market themselves more readily for festivals and venues.

So what spawns the differences in attitude toward Bulgarian folk music's incorporation into jazz compositions between Donchev's generation of players and those of Kŭrpŭrov's generation? I argue that the situation partly involves the ideological differences surrounding jazz in Bulgaria between the 1980s and 1990s. Even though jazz had been part of the Bulgarian urban milieu since the late-1920s, and had by heavily patronized by the communist regime in some cases (i.e. the EOBRT), individual musicians still struggled to find appropriate and willing venues to play their music due to the myopic focus of late socialist policy makers on musical aesthetics. Recall, for instance, Vesselin Nikolov's explanation of why he left "Red, White, and Green" in 1983 cited in Chapter 3). Even as late as the 1980s there was the same struggle over repertoire,

visas, funding and other concerns as in the 1950s and 1960s, when Liana Antoneva and others expressed many of Nikolov's concerns. By the 1990s, the problems of state accreditation, visa and passport delays, and other extra-musical concerns had all but disappeared with the fall of the communist government. For all of the frustrations inherent in playing music in Bulgaria in a capitalist economy as outlined in Chapters 4 and 5, there are no tangible state-constructed ideological barriers to playing what music one may choose. Younger musicians had an enviable amount of access to education and labor opportunities abroad, yet without the personal struggles with government interference in the playing of music. These struggles are why the resentment amongst the older generation, and why their claims of younger musicians "playing good music, but not jazz" carry more allegorical weight than empirical truth.

CONCLUSION

Clearly there are many objects, histories, social structures, and subjectivities that can be *crafted* within the Kŭrpŭrov-Donchev performance of "Mish-Mash." Some of these are my own constructions and deep imaginings of motives through the use of musical analysis, identifying musical objects and tracing their "lines of flight" to find social and historical meanings. Like Monson and Clarke with Milt Jackson or T.S. Monk with Thelonius Monk, I am inclined to embrace the magical realm of possibility and put forth my own crafted construction of this performance. Ultimately, this perspective adds to the epistemic field of possibilities that mediate the dichotomy of the magical and the rational.

But much like my conceptualization of boredom in previous chapters, "fascination" also illuminates spaces of agency, resistance, and self-expression against the ubiquitous forces of modernity. Boredom helps to frame the subject in pressing against the city and commodity fetishism by engaging with the cultural products of labor alienation. Fascination, on the other hand, highlights the subject pushing against becoming objectified through the gaze of others. Objectification has particularly been an issue for Bulgarian musicians since the late-1980s, when their music first became a widespread commodity for Western consumption. Vasil Parmakov's statement about tourists asking the Bulgarian musician if he is playing Bulgarian jazz spells out an acute awareness of the kind of objectification I speak of. Kŭrpŭrov's own response to such objectification in a recent interview conducted while playing in Austria display his mindfulness of such forces as well.

> **J.A.: Vladimir, the Austrians cannot imagine where Bulgaria is, much less what Bulgarian folk music on a saxophone sounds like. To them you're an exotic bird. Tell us more about the music that you create.**
>
> **V.K.:** I think Austrians are quite familiar with Balkan music because they are closer to the Balkans. But the West does not really distinguish between different styles and different regions. The difference between the Serbian, Bulgarian and Romanian music is great, although there are many similar things. Basically I'm a jazz musician and so I developed as one, with separate "matter" of soul and pop music, but also used elements of Bulgarian folk music, since, again I say, we know it. Sometimes I use elements and melodies that sound as "Serbian" or "Romanian," and quarter-tones of Turkish music. The mixing of styles was not intentional.
>
> Music to me is a passion. I've never been forced into anything, my parents are not making me. My brother was already a musician, I worded me otherwise - with languages and mathematics. There was an addiction to popular music. When I tried to play folk things my opportunities were not reached and I used the phrases of jazz music. So things started to mix naturally. Now I realize what things I can

> do, how to arrange and so have become rationalized, of course. I hope this year to release or at least to record their second album. And then there will be more clarity about what is received from this symbiosis (Attmansdorfer 2011b).

Austrians cannot imagine where Bulgaria is…to them you are an exotic bird.

Kŭrpŭrov's response to the interviewer's question shows an awareness of the complexes of Western gaze and self-exoticism that had been a part of Bulgarian social life since the late-19th century. He first critiques the notion of the "unknowable" Bulgaria from the Austrian perspective, given the Austro-Hungarian Empire's dalliances in regional politics during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. He then juxtaposes the critique by explaining how he formed his *crafting* self out of the social and material circumstances of his musical life ("Now I realize what things I can do, how to arrange and so have become rationalized"). Kŭrpŭrov's juxtaposition here is an attempt to mediate the notion posited by the interviewer that he is viewed as an "exotic bird," and thus an object of fascination. He does so in a way that reinforces his own sense of self as a rejoinder against those who imagine him for what he might represent – an "Other." Thus, *crafting* is itself crafted as a mechanism to reinforce agency and identity against the Austrian strawmen constructed by the interviewer.

What becomes clear through Kŭrpŭrov's interview and other examples given in this chapter is that the space of the "outside" of fascination is one of both possibility and reduction. The material subjectivity of the crafting "hand" may mediate the inherent unknowability of the "outside," but those who intuit the subject positions of others through the space of fascination, like Monson, Clarke, Monk, Attmansdorfer, are ultimately left to their own devices. Many of these perspectives from the "outside" have

historically become privileged over the voice of the subject itself due to social codes and relationships of power (Trouillot 1995), a trait all too common during Bulgaria's communist period. Despite this, I still argue that there is a valid place for such a polyphonic, historically grounded subject construction in juxtaposition to the autonomous, *transcendent* subject of jazz historiography.

My argument for the polyphonic subject constructed through the space of fascination is that it best expresses the experiences of Bulgarian musicians who engaged with jazz during the first half of the 20th century, like Boris Leviev, Asen Ovcharov, Sasho Sladura, and Lea Ivanova. In many cases, all that remains of their *crafting* subjectivities are the motivic imaginings of others opened up through the space of fascination. The social and political structures through which many of them lived did not privilege their voices, and thus what experiences they used to construct their crafting hands has been lost. In these cases, the work of imagining motives becomes even more important, serving as an archaeology of the subject. The constructions of others by necessity become the construction of the self, intuited through modes of text, memory, and nostalgia.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have shown how jazz in Bulgaria has been inexorably tied historically to conceptualizations of self and modernity amongst Bulgarians. This relationship between jazz, modernity, and subjectivity is resistant to the homogeneous constructions of jazz as wholly American in jazz historiography, necessitating new approaches in analysis and contextualization. Beginning with a critique of the conflation of transcendence and subjectivity in jazz discourse, I offered fascination and boredom as epistemic avenues through which to understand the subject's engagement with jazz throughout Bulgarian history. These new approaches accounted for the complex interactions between agents, structures of power and authority, and broader notions of aesthetic thought in Bulgaria from the late-19th century until the present day. What resulted was a more developed sense of jazz's place within Bulgarian life, the ways in which musicians and listeners imagined themselves and their identities through jazz, and the genre's fractured ontology throughout modern Bulgarian history. Simply put, I have detailed the conceptual problems inherent in the term "Bulgarian jazz," and offered a framework that critiques the reductive nature of such a term. As such, readers can better understand exactly how integrated the history of jazz in Bulgaria has been to conceptualizations of self, modernity, and amongst Bulgarians.

Returning to the anecdote and the book title with which I opened the Introduction chapter I highlighted two different perspectives questioning whether or not there was such a thing as "Bulgarian jazz." Clearly, I argued, there was some difficulty on the part

of Parmakov and Gadzhev in espousing a notion of "Bulgarian jazz." For my part, I avoided using the term as much as possible throughout the text. Though I can only postulate on the motives of Parmakov and Gadzhev, I had two reasons for not using the term "Bulgarian jazz" in the dissertation. The first was the how the adjectival form of the phrase "Bulgarian jazz" implied the inherent distinctiveness of the genre as "Bulgarian," which ignores the historical cross-cultural and cross-modernist aspects that constructed ideas about jazz in Bulgaria at different times. The second, more compelling reason was that using "Bulgarian jazz" doesn't capture the truly complex nature of the Bulgarian experience of modernity as framed through performance of, listening to, and discourse about "jazz." The word "jazz" carried many historically specific meanings throughout Bulgarian history, meanings that cannot be elucidated by centering the model of jazz historiography on America entirely. Though jazz was certainly a lynchpin of the US State Department's efforts to transmit the aura of American democracy across the globe, I argue that individuals were ultimately the arbiters of their own meanings regarding "jazz." The polyphony of voices that constitute modern subject construction build and rebuild themselves, using jazz as one possible avenue through which to accomplish that task.

More to the point, in the Prologue I began with a simply stated question loaded with meaning and possibility: why jazz? What can an exploration of jazz tell us about the experience of modernity in Bulgaria that other musical genres, or literature, or art, or politics, cannot? I posited in that prologue that "jazz" functioned as a mediator through which the experience of modernity in Bulgaria could be conceptualized in unique ways.

Throughout the dissertation, these unique lines of flight that jazz helped weave through constructing modern Bulgarian selfhood showed the mediating power that such music holds. In the 1920s and 1930s, jazz was an integral part of a new urban bourgeois that sought to mediate once and for all the subjective disjuncture between Orient and Occident that haunted a modern Bulgarian identity. In the 1950s and 1960s, jazz became a malleable object of the "bourgeois" lifestyle, pulled back and forth between musicians and the BCP as the question of what actions and objects constitute moral socialist expression in the arts was conceptualized and reconceptualized. In the post-communist period, jazz became an avenue through which some amount of subjective stability could be secured against the onslaught of commodity fetishism in a new market economy. Jazz was also a means to travel outside of Bulgaria, see the world and find oneself, much as Bulgarians like Aleko Konstantinov did in the late-19th century. Jazz was a means to critique the objectification of the Western gaze toward a Bulgaria consisting of the village in the mountains, and to carve out a space within that fascination to *craft* a meaningful moment of performance.

In other words, at each point in the long history of modern Bulgaria, jazz was at the center of the very construction of modern selves. Though the music itself has been historically marginalized for political, social, and economic reasons, the meanings of modernness perpetuated *by* the music resonate amongst Bulgarians to this day. This resonance manifests, I posited earlier, as a "polyphony of voices" accounting for the many perspectives that constitute the imagining of subjects – both self-imagining and other-imagined. Within this polyphony, fascination and boredom serve as lenses. They

serve to focus attention on hidden meanings and perspectives, all the while resonating with the Bulgarian experience of modernity on the "outside" of Europe. Jazz is the vehicle that makes such an exploration of modernity possible, allowing the subject to navigate the polyphony of their own subject formation and secure a place within the historical moment of modern life.

My hope is that this text can serve as one voice in a historical polyphony that spawns other imaginings of these musicians and their music. In addition to recovering lost voices from the past, I also seek to elucidate the historical fields of possibility of the present. Spawning our own *crafted* responses, the polyphony of subjectivity continues to build via fascinations and boredoms through which agency and subjectivity are enacted.

STATE OF THE SCENE

Although my work stands as a much needed contribution the field of jazz studies and scholarship on Southeastern Europe, there is still much work to be done in order to more fully understand the practice of jazz in Bulgaria, and amongst Bulgarians. I will address several possibilities for future scholarship on jazz in Bulgaria momentarily. First, I want to briefly comment on the happenings with the small but growing jazz scene in Bulgaria since completing my nine-month field study in Sofia in August of 2009. From Austin, I have followed the careers of the musicians that I worked with in order to get a sense of how their lives and careers have changes. My analysis of the contemporary music scene in Sofia since 1989 was highly critical and reflected many of the frustrations articulated to me by musicians in personal conversations. Many of the problems with

venues, festivals, and repertoire that I highlight in the preceding chapters still exist. However, the situation in Bulgaria for musicians in general has improved since I first started my research there in November 2008.

Thankfully, the venue problems that I observed in Sofia have improved immensely over the past two years. The success of *Soul in da Hole* since its opening in the spring of 2010 inspired the creation of several other venues in the city. Most notable amongst these is *Studio 5*, a small club housed in the National Palace of Culture (NDK) in central Sofia named for the small jazz group from the late-1950s. *Tea House* continues to book live music three to four nights per week, including a continuation of the Wednesday night jazz concerts with Momchev and Dimitrov. In fact, the owners of *Tea House* found their business model to be successful enough to warrant opening a second location in Burgas in 2011. Other mainstay venues like *Swingin' Hall* and *Sofia Live Club* continue to regularly book artists playing jazz, with no closures of venues that I mentioned in the dissertation. Venues in Plovdiv, Ruse, and in the Black Sea Resort cities continue to grow as well.

Concert series and festivals have been successful as well, with mainstays like BIJFE joined by several new Ventsi Blagoev's *Live Zara Jazz* has recently completed the 20th installment of the series, and is still investigating the possibility of expanding into a festival in the near future. Varna Summer Jazz will celebrate its twentieth anniversary in 2012, still under the direction of Anatoli Vapirov and offering Bulgarian musicians unique opportunities to play with foreign jazz artists. July Jazz Smolyan enters its fourth

year in 2011, and remains the only festival to date to combine *ethnojazz* with other non-jazz genres on the same stage.

The most notable of the new festivals is called *A to JazZ*, a project planned and commissioned by Angel Zaberski, taking place in the Doctor's Garden (*Lekarska gradina*) in Sofia on July 1-3 2011. *A to JazZ*'s uniqueness lies in the theme for the first year of the festival, which was a catalogue of various styles throughout jazz history. Bulgarian groups like the *Sentimental Swingers* and the Mihail Yossifov Sextet perform music from prior to WWII, while the festival culminated with a Frank Sinatra tribute featuring American vocalist and Sinatra impersonator Monty Aidem with the Sofia big band *Brass Association*. The focus on music from the first half-century of American jazz imbues the new festival with a historical perspective on Bulgaria's jazz past as well, with groups playing many of the same works that *Jazz Ovcharov*, *Jazz of the Optimists*, and *Jazz of the Youth* played in the first half of the twentieth century.

EPILOGUE: THE "RESONANCE" OF THE WORK

In recent months, as I neared completion of this dissertation, I began to think intently about the kind of impact my research could have on the fields of ethnomusicology, jazz studies, and other related disciplines. As scholars, we often frame such thoughts in terms of how a work may *resonate* with other scholars, with the communities that we work with, and with ordinary people. In light of recent research into the history of listening and resonance, I want to briefly offer a "theoretical coda" that

opens up our notions about "resonance" and how scholars can look at their works in terms of the resonating voices that inhabit their writing.

The linkage of resonance in conjunction with subject formation goes back to the very beginnings of modern Western metaphysics. As Veit Erlmann shows in his book on the history of modern aurality (2010), the young Descartes explored such a conflation of resonance and self within the margins of his seminal *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1648) and earlier works such as *Compendium musicae* (1618). Drawing upon the work of contemporaries such as Galileo on the idea of "percussing" as a way to account for the difference of pitch on plucked strings of various lengths, Descartes postulated that the ear could serve as the mediator between the resonating body and the reasoning mind. Erlmann conceptualizes Descartes' move within the scope of rationality as such:

> The space the thinker traverses as he gains "acquaintanceship" with himself by estranging himself from the world reverberates with voices engaged in an inner dialogue, an internal *discussio*, a breaking down of the composite entity called "ego"….into a multitude of opposing memories, representations, beliefs, and persuasions. It is this *concussio* of voices inside the "thinking thing" that provides certainty. *Cutio ergo sum* (Erlmann 2010, 37).

Cutio ergo sum. *I vibrate, therefore, I am*.

This confluence of reason and resonance in Descartes' work was the beginning of an extensive discourse centered on subjectivity, acoustics, anatomy, and metaphysics that Erlmann charts through the works of an array of thinkers and scientists over a period of 300 years, including Claude Perrault, Hermann von Helmholtz, and Günther Anders. Though Erlmann shows the historical strands within the confluence of reason and resonance take, I am intrigued by the potential for expanding the Cartesian "resonating

subject" into more phenomenological terms. This Cartesian focus on resonance, somewhat obscured by other parts of the philosopher's work, gave the subject a possible avenue to ground itself within the vast "sea" of reason. Taken to its logical extreme, such a "resonating subject" could offer new ways to think objects within texts in the realm of the *meta*, teasing out new meanings cast in dialogue with other meanings.

Nowhere do I see a more practical application of resonance in this way than with the statue of Sasho Sladura from Chapter 2. In that chapter, I argued that the statue was an allegory of loss, silence, and disembodiment for the lost generation of bourgeois culture-makers absorbed into the communist machine of social morality. His silent form is indicative of the lack of voice given to similar writers, artists, and musicians. Though this silence is, on some level, a nostalgic construction at the hands of the Bulgarians who commissioned the statue, it is still an accurate argument to make with regard to that period in Bulgarian history.

But in his current "form," one can also argue that Sladura is the very embodiment of a "resonating subject," albeit in a far different fashion than Descartes intended. With a "body" made of hollow cast bronze, Sladura does nothing *but* resonate. The statue vibrates under the aid of external stimuli (the wind, people knocking against the metal), but also emits its own resonance based on the expansion and contraction of bronze in the heat and the cold. While a far cry from a Cartesian resonance due to thought itself, the social implications for Sladura's particular kind of resonance are profound. In short, Sladura's resonance is a mediator against the specter of silence and disembodiment that his statue allegorically represents. The two meanings are inexorably intertwined in

meaning. On one hand, Sladura's statue represents the silence and repression of the bourgeois and the nostalgia for those still living from that time for a life that never happened. On the other, Sasho continues to speak through the resonance of his statue, never totally silent no matter what violence history enacted upon his living body. Paraphrasing Sylvia Plath's quote from Chapter 2, then, "dead people talk, like anyone else."

Linking the resonating body with death has its roots in late-19th century with the advent of sound reproduction technology. Jonathan Sterne shows how early ideas about the phonograph were integrally connected to new technologies of preserving the dead, such as embalming. More to the point, the phonograph was thought to be able to pick up the "vibrating frequencies" of the dead, providing a medium through which the dead could speak. Interest in voicing the dead became so socially pervasive that it spawned a brief fad of placing a gramophone on the coffin of a recently deceased person, playing back to the deceased's voice for all of the funeral goers (Sterne 2003, 289-98).

By placing together Sterne's resonating dead with Descartes' resonating living, the possibility arises for a similar resonance in the writing *about* those subjects. Throughout the pages of this dissertation, I postulate that such subjective resonance fills this work with its own kind of conceptual resonance. This goes beyond simply how scholarship is interpreted by others, and beyond hermeneutics in general. What I am proposing is the employ the idea of resonance as a way to think about scholarship *aesthetically* as well. In this way, we don't just read about the people that inhabit the

pages of this dissertation and other works, but we can listen to them as well through the varying intensities of their own resonances.

It is my hope that scholars can also debate whether or not our works "resonate" in the ways that I have described. Regardless, when I next return to Plovdiv, I intend to sit beside Sladura and listen intently to what he has to say.

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